

BISKRA

AND THE DESERT

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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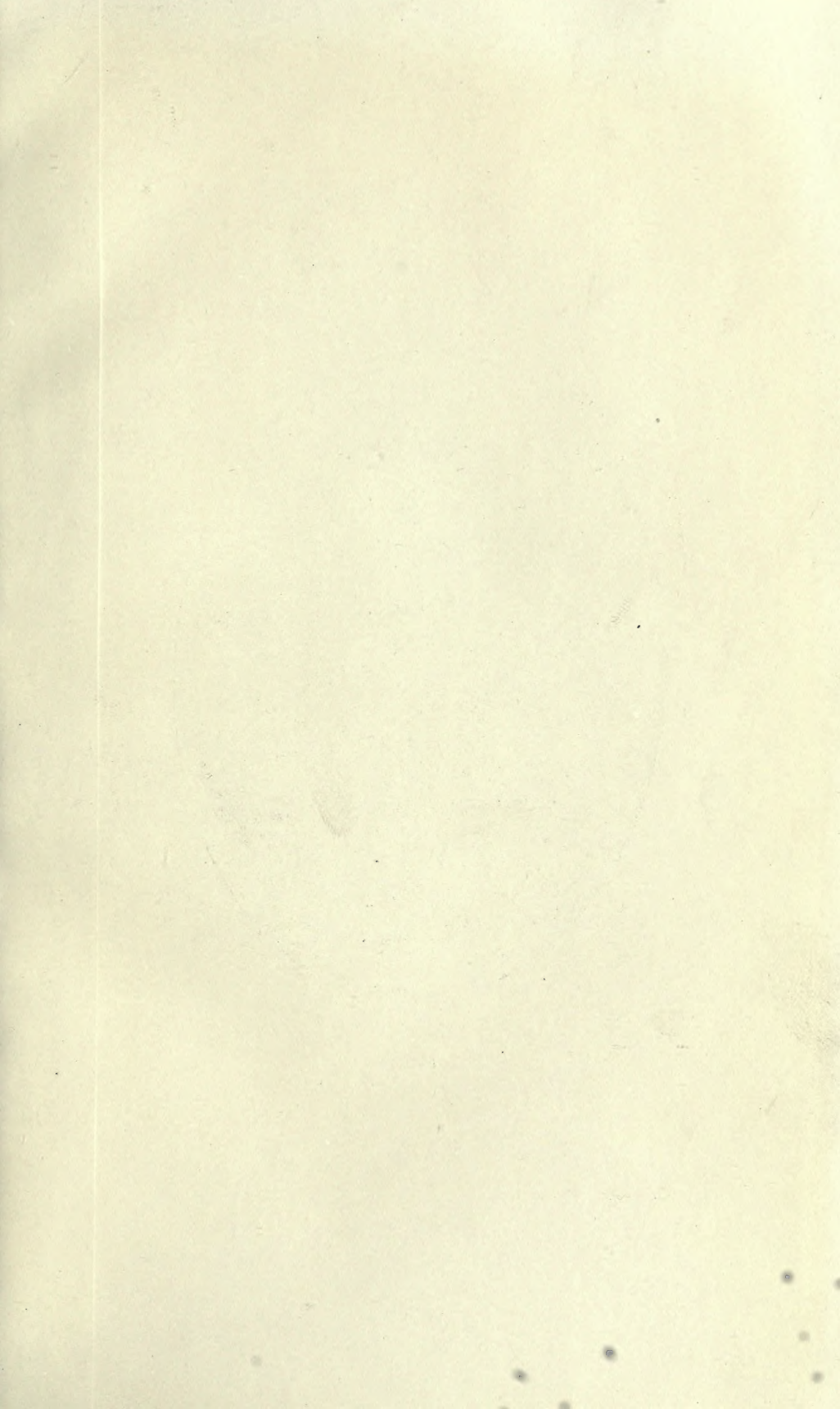


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To Mr and Mrs Geo. Bolton
with New Year's greetings
from the
Author

Franklin Hall
Dec. 29th 1906.

Biskra and the Desert.





Marie,
1885.



The Author,
1885.

BISKRA

AND THE DESERT:

A RECORD OF A TOUR IN ALGERIA
IN THE YEAR 1885.

PRIVATELY PRINTED.

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PRINTED BY G. F. SEWELL, 52, GODWIN STREET, BRADFORD.

THE following notes of a most interesting tour taken many years ago, have been put into book form at the urgent and repeated request of my family, who were wishful to possess some memento of the travels and wanderings of their Father and Mother.

James Burnley.

BRAMHOPE HALL,

December, 1906.


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NOTES ON A TOUR IN ALGERIA IN 1885.

AVING accepted an invitation to join Mr. and Mrs. H. on a visit to Algeria, and arranging to meet at Marseilles, Marie (my wife) and I left Bradford, Thursday, March 26th, 1885, passing the evening at the Cannon Street Hotel with Arthur, my son-in-law, who happened to be in London. Arthur and I had a pleasant chat with Mr. Brunet in the smoke-room.

Friday, March 27th. Left by the 7-40 morning train. Chiselhurst seemed, in the morning sun, to stand out very prettily as we passed through. Arriving at Dover, 9-30, we were soon on board, and in less than two hours, after a pleasant passage, the steamer was slowly steaming between the two long wooden piers of the Calais harbour. After lunch we continued our journey to Paris. This being the longest railway route between London and Paris, and through a comparatively flat country, makes the journey monotonous and tedious, and but for the short sea passage would be much less used. It was made more tedious by our

continuing the journey from the Northern to the Lyons Station by the Circular Railway, which took fully an hour. Ordinarily it makes an agreeable change and is more convenient to take a voiture between the two stations.

We had intended taking Coupé-Lits from Paris, but all were engaged ; however, after a rather hurried little dinner at the *buffet* which was crowded, we got comfortably seated in the same carriage, starting punctually at 7-13 p.m. Stopping a few minutes at Dijon, we descended to look at the old *buffet* where we had often had an enjoyable dish of *potage* on our Swiss journeys *via* Pontarlier. At Lyons we had time for lunch, and here, to our great joy, we lost two of our fellow-travellers, which, leaving only four passengers in our compartment, enabled us to make arrangements for a comfortable sleep during the rest of the night. Our two fellow-travellers were a young fellow going to Constantinople and a young lady, Miss Brownhill, bound also like ourselves for Algiers.

Saturday, March 28th. We sped rapidly along past Avignon, Tarascon, Arles, through a deeply interesting country of which we had a fine view, it being now broad daylight. Ordinarily the trains in France can scarcely be termed 'rapid,' but this one justly bears that name, which perhaps only those would challenge who have had experience of the

North trains, say between London and Peterbro', or the 'boat trains' between Dover, Folkstone and London. We arrived punctually in Marseilles, 10-41 a.m. Mr. H. was at the station to meet us, he and Mrs. H. having arrived at 6 a.m. We drove to the Hotel Noailles.

Before lunch we had a stroll to see Mr. F., a wool merchant at Marseilles, whom we found after a long ramble, my friend having got the wrong address. An elderly, gentlemanly man, he received us in his little French drawing-room with his youngest son. Having known two of his sons, I always felt some interest in the family. After this short visit we marched rapidly to our hotel, past the old port, which certainly was not as salubrious as the open sea ; if there is fear of cholera, I should think the greatest danger will lie here. Called at the office of the Transatlantique to arrange for our berths, also telegraphed home. Went on board, and started to the minute at 5 p.m. A number of young soldiers were returning home on furlough, each one cheerily answering to his name and at once marching with his kit to his berth. We had comfortable cabins, but as the sea promised to be troublesome, the ladies got to bed and, in fact, stopped there, nor did they budge till we got into port. The vessel rolled terribly, and I thought often of the loss of the *Captain* in the bay of Biscay. We got fairly into the ocean, and as night was getting advanced, we also retired to our rolling rest.

Sunday, March 29th. The Sabbath came upon us on a rolling sea, the wind being at our back impelled us onward, but at the expense of steadiness. However Mr. H. came pretty early to our cabin to say that we were passing the islands. I shook myself up, tumbled on my things, and we strolled out. Minorca was on view, altho' at some distance. The ship still rolled very uncomfortably, but Mr. H. and I sat down to lunch, and I think fairly showed we were equal to the occasion.

We saw a few dolphins which are generally to be seen about the Balearic Isles. I remember when passing between the islands three years ago to have seen a large number disporting themselves. The sea appeared to settle down a little during the latter part of the day. We passed few vessels on our voyage—our ship made steady and continuous progress. These steamers appear built for speed, long and narrow, with powerful engines. The passengers were not numerous, and as many kept their berths, we had not many at the table. The afternoon was fine and sunny, and the evening clear but rather cold; the stars shone brilliantly in an unclouded sky. The pole star looked lower down, much nearer the horizon than in our more northern latitude. It was interesting to watch the varying positions of Ursa Major as it circled round the central star. We walked on deck all the evening after dinner; as the evening advanced, one



Court of Dar el Ouard.

and another tried to discern the African lights, and by-and-bye, unmistakably, a faint twinkling was seen right away on the far dark horizon, which persisting in its brightness, slowly but surely made itself known as the Algiers light. Well now, it became a question, should we disembark to-night or stay till morning ; and as we rapidly neared the port, and it being about 10 o'clock, we decided to leave, if our friends were there to receive us. Soon we were moored in the port, and Jno. Ed. was at once seen in one of the many boats which had come alongside to meet friends. Immediately we prepared for landing, and in a very short time were driving rapidly along the winding roads of Mustapha in a magnificently moonlight night. Algiers has a peculiarly interesting appearance, and the bright moonlight lent an additional charm to the fine noble buildings on the quay, in contrast with the old Arab town stretching up behind and along the western slope. Sir Morton Peto was largely concerned in the erection of the palatial buildings which face the long line of the port. After a long though very interesting drive we arrived at Dar-el-Ourd, Jno. Edward's pretty residence, where we were warmly welcomed by his wife. My wife was glad to have again a comfortable bed on terra firma, which she much preferred to her cradle on the deep. To me the sea is always interesting ; one is free from the worry and chafing details surrounding life in business.

Monday, March 30th. As we looked out for the first time from our bedroom windows, the sun was brightly shining on a lovely landscape. The house being at a considerable elevation has a very extensive view, the greater part of Mustapha lying just below us. On our left the port was in full view, the incoming steamers being visible for some time before their entry into port. The Mediterranean stretches right before us to the horizon. We had a pleasant drive down the winding road to Algiers after breakfast, and visited the Customs to look after the heavy luggage. We saw the young lady companion of our railway journey, who had come down with her aunt on the same errand as ourselves. We spent the day in looking round our immediate locality.

Tuesday, March 31st. The view as one looked out in the early morning was lovely ; the splendid panorama stretching far away invited the attention. One could not help thinking of the dark and cruel days, when Algiers was a nest of pirates. It would be a magnificent place to bombard ; no doubt Lord Exmouth found splendid practice. After breakfast we went by rail with Mr. and Mrs. H. to Souk Ali, where we passed the night. The old place looked much as it did three years ago when I was there last.

Wednesday, April 1st. After lunch returned by rail to Agha, the station for Mustapha ; passed the



Mustapha Supérieur.

day about home. Miss Sugden (Sarah), her cousin, Miss Mary Sugden, and Miss Bingley (a lady companion who is travelling with them) dined with us in the evening. These three ladies are travelling together, and have been several weeks staying at Hotel Kirsch, close by, in Mustapha; they intend going on to Tunis, and forward by Malta through Italy; in fact making, they say, a twelve months' tour. They are rather an interesting trio; Miss Sarah S. is a tall interesting Spanish type of beauty, her cousin, Miss Mary S., chatty and intelligent, and Miss B., rather quieter, perhaps more of a blue-stocking, but certainly clever as an artist; several of her sketches giving sufficient proof of her ability. We all spent several pleasant evenings together during our stay at Mustapha.

Thursday, April 2nd. We drove to Souk Ali with Mr. and Mrs. H., calling at a village on the way, near to which resided Mme. Arnaud, on whom we called, but found her confined to her bedroom. The country about here is interesting. We continued our journey, arriving at Souk Ali after a very pleasant drive, having passed by "Quatre Chemins," where lies a large property in which John E. is interested. We were glad to get to our old rooms. The night set in like Egyptian darkness. Here the contrast is great between the clear, blazing sunny day, and the sudden dropping into the shades of evening; but soon the

stars strike out with a brilliancy which arrests at once the notice of anyone coming from the land of fogs. After retiring to rest we were serenaded with a wonderfully jubilant chorus of frog music from a concert which was being held in one of the many tanks which are here very common on every estate, and absolutely necessary for the supply of water to the orange groves.

Friday, April 3rd. Good Friday. Drove to Boufarick after lunch. Mrs. H. and Mrs. B. were engaged in the town. Mr. H. and I strolled about this rather lively place, which is one of the important towns in Algeria. There is here a large and important market every Monday. We entered the church at which the devotional service of the stations was going on. The priest in his circuit round the church stopped, and kneeling before each of the twelve pictures of the Calvary, offered a short prayer, the school children who followed him, immediately at the close of each prayer sang in chorus a verse from one of their hymns ; the effect to me was striking, and I was much interested in the service as they all stopped, knelt and sang until the entire circuit was made. No wonder the Roman Catholics retain such hold on the people.

In the afternoon of to-day we drove to Quatre Chemins to view the land in which Jno. Ed. was

interested. It was exceedingly interesting to watch the deep ploughing by the steam-plough, driven by two movable engines, connected by a rope at a distance say of 300 yards; it appeared to work admirably. The soil in the valley of the Metiga is of great depth; when first cultivated it was terribly unhealthy, and great numbers of the people perished from the pestilence caused by the breaking up of the soil which had been undisturbed for ages. The vine is now being largely cultivated, and it is considered that the wine, in the course of a few years will successfully compete with Bordeaux. It possesses more fire or alcohol than the French wines. The country has been well opened up by the fine roads. Whatever the French may do for any country they colonize, there can be no doubt of the immense benefit conferred upon the people by these magnificent roads of which any country might be proud.

After dinner we all sat round the log fire in the large drawing room, reading partly home news, and partly listening to the weird tales told by Jno. Robt., of the estate, being, some parts of it, an Arab cemetery, and of the holes which are now and then found, into which it would be dangerous to fall. I went now and again to the terrace outside; the darkness and silence was only relieved by the bright stars and the burst of frog music. The surroundings here lend additional interest and zest to the Arab story-teller.

Saturday, April 4th. Mr. H. and I had a short exercise in the saddle on Arab horses. Mr. E. and family with the Misses Sugden and Miss Bingley drove over from Algiers. Strolled about the gardens. Miss B. sketched the house from the orange grove. All lunched together, and in the afternoon our visitors returned to Algiers. Quiet evening after dinner. Looked over the newspapers from England. Lamps and log fire. Outside, Egyptian darkness, with a tremendous downpour of rain, along with terrific thunder and lightning.

Sunday, April 5th. Attended service at Protestant Chapel, Boufarick. Mr. Bost preached. The people sit whilst singing. We took part in the sacramental service at conclusion of sermon. Passed remainder of day quietly at Souk Ali. I took up a book giving some interesting information on Algeria, with an account of the district of Boufarick. Quiet Sunday evening. No going out after dark, the deathly stillness inclining one to feel safer inside. All doors and gates are closed at nightfall, and one easily understands the eastern dread of being left "outside the gates." Retired early to rest, lulled to sleep by our friendly musicians the frogs.

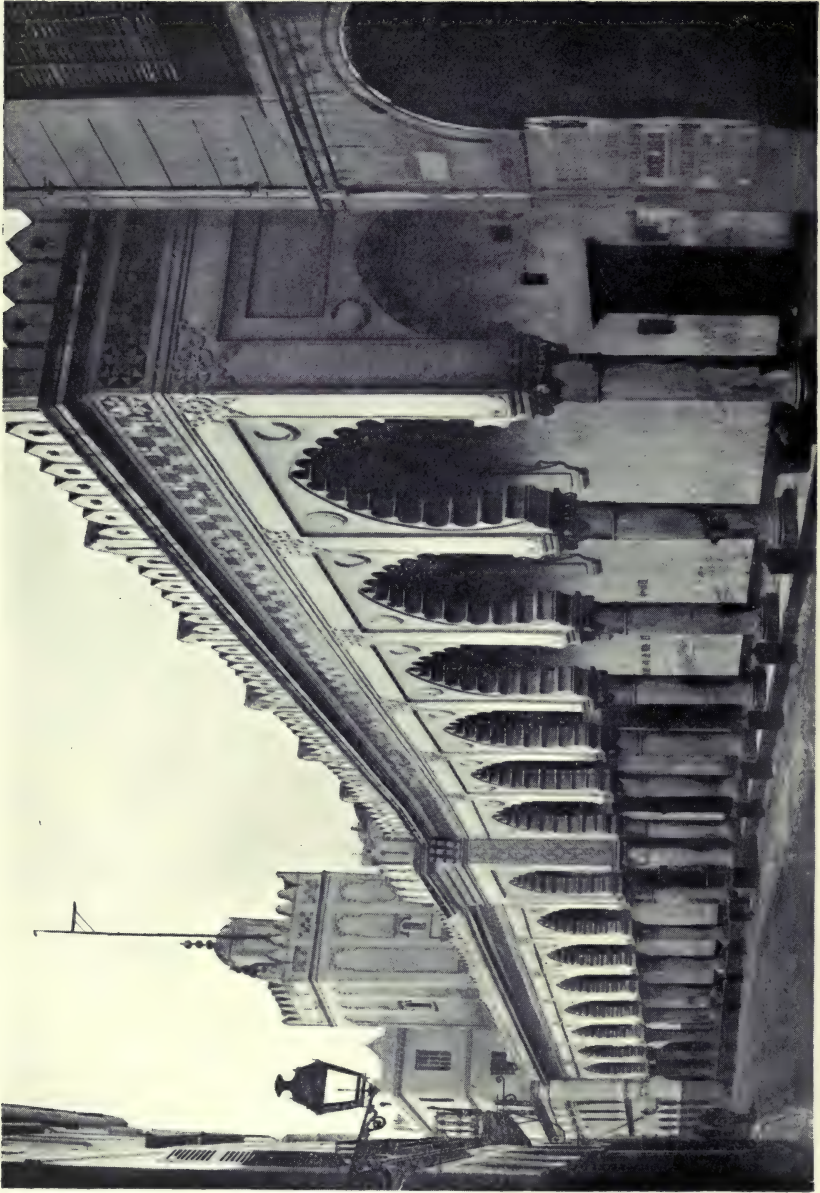
Monday, April 6th. Returned this morning to Mustapha, Mrs. H. and Mrs. B. by train, Mr. H. and I by carriage. We had a long interesting drive



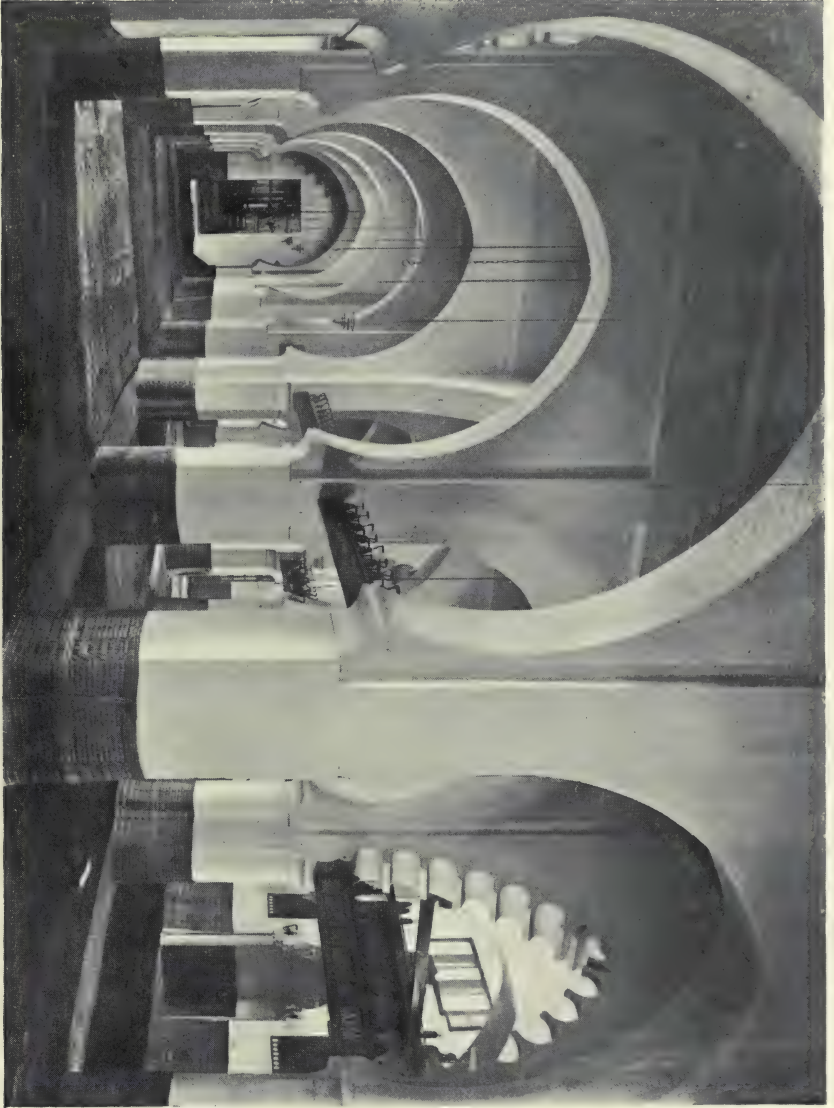
Street Scene in the Kasbah.







Grande Mosque.



Interior of Mosque El Kbir.





Rue de la Kasbah.

arriving about noon. In the afternoon we went to a *matinée*—a kind of reception at M. Deglaire's, a French banker of Algiers. There was a large gathering, the Governor of Algiers being there. Coffee, wine, dancing, conversation, &c. We were shown through the house, built and furnished in the Moorish style.

Tuesday, April 7th. Passed the day quietly.

Wednesday, April 8th. Lunched with M. Bono, Mr. H., and Jno. E. in Algiers.

Thursday, April 9th. Marie and I went down to Algiers. Photographs taken in Rue Babazon. Bought some presents for home, lunched in one of the restaurants, and afterwards visited the old Arab part of the city. Strange and deeply interesting are the sights which meet the view at every step; long, narrow winding passages, an immense mass of humanity packed in small compass, innumerable shops as large as a good-sized box, in which sat the people at their various trades and occupations, shoemakers, tailors, joiners, jewellers, cafés, chess-players, letter-writers, schools in which sat numbers of children repeating continuously in swinging sing-song tones, texts from the Koran. Visited the Jewish Synagogue. Returned home to Mustapha heartily tired.

Friday, April 10th. Marie and I took train for Blidah this morning—Hotel d'Orient. After lunch drove to the Gorge de Chiffa. The afternoon was wet but we enjoyed the visit. We had tea at the little hotel there, and drove forward some distance along the fine gorge, the rocks towering on either side to a great height. This is one of the principal sights of the district ; there are a great number of monkeys, but the rain kept them in, so that we missed the sight of them. In returning, visited a curious cave on the roadside containing fine stalactites, got back to hotel, and after dinner visited one of the Café Chantants ; there were sat a large number of staid, orderly Arabs, who quietly took everything in a matter-of-fact way. We were struck with the orderly appearance of the company. In the evening there was a heavy fall of rain. Not being well in the night, I was afraid I was going to have one of my bad attacks of head-ache. The night passed on, and the rain came down in torrents.

Saturday, April 11th. Fine morning after rain. Felt rather better. We strolled out into the town after breakfast. Blidah is an improving place, and of considerable importance. There are a large number of soldiers here, being in fact a military centre, with a great depôt for cavalry horses. There are some fine public gardens in which we strolled, and sitting on one of the many benches which were placed about,

we rested for some time. I laid myself down for some time, being weak and weary. The warm sunbeams beating down upon us refreshed and warmed me, and by-and-bye I felt more cheery and brighter. We walked afterwards round the town and made some purchases in one of the many good shops here. We were rather amused with an Arab who ran after us, and who evidently appeared to recognise me as someone he ought to speak to. I wondered what in the world the man wanted, but he soon made me at ease by saying he was from the farm at Souk Ali, and was having a holiday with a companion who had joined him. I at once recognised him as one of the Arabs I had seen on Mr. H.'s farm. I gave him a franc and he smilingly left us, having cleverly, as he no doubt thought, accomplished his object. Returned to lunch at the Hotel. This Hotel I should think is largely visited by tourists, Blidah being on the main route between Algiers and Oran. It is fairly comfortable ; good table d'hôte, but like at most of the hotels about here the water-closets are simply abominable. Returned by rail to Algiers after lunch, stopping at Agha, the nearest station to Mustapha. With some difficulty we managed to secure a trap with two Arab ponies driven by an Arab lad. We started up the steep road and ran the entire distance of three or four miles without a single stoppage. The Arab horses are wonderful animals, thoroughbred, and full of fire.

Sunday, April 12th. Attended the English Church in the morning. The English clergyman, Mr. Boyce, officiated. This is a pretty little church for the English residents. The service was conducted in the usual form ; I was rather surprised to see so many people leave just before the sermon ; I was told this was a common practice. I looked upon it as a very unseemly thing. The congregation would be formed mostly of the English Mustaphites, and impressed me rather with the idea of a gathering at a fashionable morning concert. A great number of all sorts of carriages were in attendance. After lunch as I was strolling down Ali Sherif's lane, I met Jno. Robt. with a Mr. Butler who formerly resided at Dar-el-Ourd ; I returned with them to the house. The young ladies from the Hotel Kirsch came also in to tea, and stayed the evening. J. R. C. was expecting a party from England by the steamer this evening, amongst them a young lady to whom he is engaged. Later in the evening we could see far on the sea the lights of the coming vessel. The young ladies were starting for Tunis next Wednesday. We have spent several pleasant evenings together, and as we are leaving in the morning for Cherchel we bid them good-bye.

Monday, April 13th. We left early by train, Mr. and Mrs. H., Mrs. B. and self stopping at the next station beyond Blidah where the carriage had been

sent on the day before to await us. The morning was fine, and we found our coachman with carriage waiting for us ; we had intended breakfasting on leaving the train but found that we should have given notice, so were obliged to move on. We got comfortably seated in the carriage, and with three horses abreast we rolled merrily along, stopping at a roadside auberge where in a very short time a comfortable lunch was provided. Our host was an old French soldier, exceedingly obliging and chatty.

Off we started from Birkouta, the name of the village where we lunched, and driving along the level plain passed Marengo, which I remembered well three years ago, having passed a night here, on past the Tombeau de la Reine which we left on our right, in the distance. The country now became more hilly, as we were approaching the mountains. There are many Roman remains in these parts, one, a fine aqueduct just before reaching Cherchel, at which place we arrived about six o'clock. We "descended" at the Hotel de Commerce. They could not find us all rooms that night in the Hotel, but my wife and I were accommodated in a private house or annexe close by. After dinner I and Marie retired to our room as I felt rather squeamish and was afraid of being sick ; I had got a little upset during the day. However I sat comfortably in an easy chair most of the evening, and after a time I began to feel better.

Tuesday, April 14th. Awoke early with the cock crowing. Long before dawn the crowing began, coming apparently from all quarters of the town. In all my experience I think I never heard such persistent salutation and challenge, loud and long prolonged. One old stager I recognised as being determined to keep the "cock of the midden," for times without number he struck up in reply to some stubborn rival, who from the faintness of the sound, must have been throwing back the challenge from some far-distant quarter. As daylight appeared the chucking and crowing became intolerable, becoming, in comparison with the Souk Ali frog music, altogether unbearable. So up I got, and dressed. There was someone outside, evidently busily employed cleaning boots. I felt much better this morning; the sun was brightly shining, and as we strolled out to the Hotel to breakfast, we felt to enjoy the change. After breakfast we walked out to view the place, engaging an Arab who spoke good French, and went about his business in a professional manner. Cherchel—in the time of the Romans, Caesarea—stands on a small portion of the area occupied during the time of its ancient splendour, when it was the capital of Mauritania Caesarea; in every direction one comes across remains of past grandeur. The Arena is half buried, but sufficient remains to show clearly its extent. We sat some time on the dark massive stones; the sun pouring down upon us his fiery rays,





Arab Cemetery.

and plucking the fruit of the prickly pear which grew luxuriously around us, we were carried back to the days of Rome and Carthage, and the time when all this district was teeming with an active population. There are signs and traces along the entire coast of a past highly-cultivated and powerful race. We returned by the sea, along the sands and rocks, picking up from time to time small mosaics, which evidently had formed part of the Roman pavements, but which were now being washed and buried in the sand. As we mounted to the town we looked into a Marabout, the burial-place of some worthy chief, and had a few words with the keeper of the place, who, with his wife and three or four children, occupied a low building at the far end of the court-yard.

Had lunch, and then explored the western part of the town, visited the Arab cemetery, mostly mounds of earth covered with stones. One is often reminded of the ancient custom of piling heaps of stones to mark a sacred spot. On the road side some new houses were being built, and the ground which they were excavating was full of stone coffins and urns, denoting the site of some vast cemetery. The ancient mosque now used as a hospital is very interesting. In the new mosque I listened for some time to the Elder expounding the Law to a number of Arabs who were all seated on the ground ; I got close to them and sat as if I understood as well as they the Arabic in

which he spoke. Of course I had put off my boots which I carried in my hands ; the others didn't enter, being tired of loosing and putting on boots. Ascended the tower, from which we had a fine and extensive view of the country, and could easily conceive how the ancient city would spread right away to the hills to the south, from the higher parts of which might be seen the games and fights in the arena below. We walked along the outer part of the town, and after a long, rather weary ramble, turned in to dinner, which generally was one of the most important things of the day. A smart steam yacht came into the little port in the evening ; it was called, I think, the *Olivia*, belonging to Lord somebody, whose name I forget ; two or three of the party had been in the town for provisions, &c. Mr. H. and I strolled down and had a word with one or two of them. We admired the build of the vessel.

At dinner we had a long conversation with a Major Keith, a Scotchman, who was spending a short time in the place on his tour from India to London, where he was going to superintend the erection at the coming Indian and Colonial Exhibition of a large Indian gateway for one of the Indian Princes. We had coffee with him after dinner at the Café across the road, where Mr. H. and he had a long confab on many things.

We retired to rest in our fresh bedroom in the

Hotel, to which all our things had been transferred from the other quarters. The stars shone brightly over the Mediterranean, and again we were calmly resting on the North African shores, with the Arabs about us, successors to the great races who in past ages thronged this historic land.

Wednesday, April 15th. Fred's birthday ; he will not receive in time the letter posted to him some days ago. After breakfast we prepared for our departure from the coast. The carriage was brought round, our half-breed driver and his three Arab horses looking quite prepared for the stiff journey before us, and, the condensed baggage having been securely placed on the coachman's box, we mounted again our comfortable landau, and were soon without the gates *en route* for Hammam Righa. About a mile or so beyond Cherchel we saw the ruins of an ancient aqueduct. After a short time we got into the level plain forming the extreme end of the Metidja, arriving about noon at Marengo, where we intended lunching. While this was being prepared we strolled through the Arab market which was being held in the large enclosed space just outside the town. To a European these markets are of wonderful interest. The Arabs from all the surrounding districts coming here to buy or sell the produce and simple manufactures of the country, pay toll for the privilege of exposing their goods for sale. They are a fine, intelligent race, quite

able to hold their own in bargaining, and fully alive to the value of money. All kinds of articles of domestic wear are exposed, spread out on the ground ; the seller, squatted down in the midst of them, quietly waiting buyers, not pressing or shouting for custom, but apparently indifferent whether he sold anything or nothing. This quiet, stolid indifference is a striking feature in the Arab character, which one cannot fail to contrast with the hurried anxiety and push of European traders. People brought their shoes to mend, as well as kettles, pans, &c., in fact, all kinds of repairs could be done. Cobblers, doctors, tinkers, tailors, with all the trades, are here assembled, with their wares spread over the entire ground. Consultation with the doctor, bleeding—one operation of which we saw on a young man, the operator using an instrument, cup shape, and with his mouth drawing the blood into the cup—tooth drawing, horse shoeing. We sauntered in and out and amongst them, deeply interested in the scene. Marengo has quite a modern look ; all the land round the place is laid out for streets in accordance with plans previously arranged ; a large circular open space, the streets radiating from this centre, and opening out from the main streets or avenues at right angles. The French have system and order in all they do, and this is stamped on all the towns in Algeria where their influence has been at all felt. All modern French towns are admirably arranged for being rapidly cleared by cavalry and

artillery in case of insurrection We returned to the Hotel, which was crowded with people who had come to the market ; however, we managed to obtain a very good lunch, and shortly afterwards were fairly on our journey again. After a time we had traversed the level plain, and we now began the ascent of the mountain range, the scenery becoming more and more interesting and bolder as we slowly mounted the higher ranges. Mr. H. and I from time to time walked up the steeper slopes. A rather exciting incident occurred about here. Leaving the ladies in the carriage, we both walked along the road admiring the scenery, and as we got considerably in advance, the carriage toiling along at a much slower pace, Mr. H. and I got separated, and I, supposing him to be in advance, joined the carriage at an easier part of the road, and we drove along expecting to pick him up ; after driving a considerable distance and not meeting with him, we became alarmed, for although we met many Arabs not one of them had passed a stranger. Not one of the Arabs we met could speak a word of French, and it was fortunate for us that our half-breed coachman could question the travellers we met. There had been from time to time some foul murders in these parts, and it appeared to me we were running a certain amount of danger, for if a number of these savage-looking fellows had combined, they might have made short work of us. Mrs. H. became very uneasy ; we resolved to drive back along the

road, and after some time we spied Mr. H., stripped of his coat, coming along the ridge at a distance, his white shirt glistening in the sun. We had all begun to feel alarmed, and the sight of him was a great relief. Our coachman had been anxious, as he told us afterwards that this incident had given him "un diable de peur." However, after a little mutual blaming of each other, we drove steadily along the winding road, and towards evening came in sight of the large hotel, high above us in the distance, which, after a considerable amount of zigzagging, we reached about five o'clock. This Hotel Hammam Righa has been greatly enlarged since I was last here three years ago. Jno. E. and family were here, having arrived the same day from Algiers. There was not a large company, but we sat down to a comfortable dinner, and after an enjoyable evening, retired to rest amongst the mountains.

Thursday, April 16th. As we look out of our bedroom window in the morning we see signs of a wet day; the clouds and mist are round about, interfering with the fine and extensive views from the hotel. After breakfast strolled out in the direction of the forest, but the dampness and wet caused us soon to retrace our steps. Being obliged to spend our time inside, we rambled over the hotel. The proprietor, Arles du Four, appears to have entered into a great speculation; when the scheme is finished—if it ever

be finished—the hotel will be large and commodious, but a great outlay of money is necessary, and just now there appears to be an interval of rest in the building operations. Spent evening after dinner in the smoke room and billiard room. The company is composed mostly of people come to take the benefit of the baths, which are considered good in cases of rheumatism, gout, &c. One of the springs has a temperature of 113° Fahrenheit as it issues from the ground. All the district appears highly volcanic, and very often slight shocks of earthquake are experienced in the neighbourhood, at which the people here appear very little alarmed.

Friday, April 17th. There was a tremendous thunderstorm during the night, with vivid flashes of lightning ; the day continued persistently wet. Read the papers ; the war news is becoming deeply interesting ; Russia and England appear on the verge of collision on the Afghan question ; there may be war before we get back home. Wrote home. Dinner is a time when the guests are drawn together, and on a wet day becomes the most important event. The guests fill one long table, one end of which is monopolised by our party. After dinner we take *café* as usual in the billiard room ; Mr. H. and I try a game at billiards. Adjoining, is a room separated by a large curtain from the billiard room ; in this recess is a table at which 'Baccarat' is played, but this being

neither more nor less than a gambling room we kept aloof from it. Mr. H. had a long talk with the proprietor, protesting against this being established in his otherwise well-conducted hotel.

Saturday. April 18th. Brighter morning. We strolled out to the village of Hammam Righa, looked in at the School-room, passed the Post Office, the Mairie, and buildings of other functionaries, for as there are a number of soldiers stationed here, the French system of order and propriety manifests itself as usual in the regulations and general arrangements for the good government of the people, few though they be, for there appeared very few houses altogether. After lunch drove to Bou Medfa, a poor little village, the people half French, half Arab, eking out apparently a miserable existence in scratching the soil. The weather had changed, and as we drove home enjoyed the varied and extensive views. Right away in front of the hotel across the deep valley stands the prominent village of Vesoul Benian, where land had been given by the French Government to a large number of immigrants, who had left the lost provinces of Alsace and Lorraine. Before dinner strolled up behind the hotel to the hot spring whence flows the water of the baths ; it was deeply interesting to see a spring of hot water coming out of the ground. The rock about here is blood red, everything appears to have passed through the fire. There are ruins and

traces of past life in all directions. Mr. H. found a fine specimen of the ordinary Arab millstone which he secured, intending to carry it to Souk Ali. After dinner we spent the evening in the large salon or drawing room, an immense, lofty room capable of accommodating a large company.

Sunday, April 19th. Fine morning. We took a long walk on the hills, passing by many Arab tents; miserable dwellings, simply shielding the inmates from the weather. There were several miserable objects; one poor old Arab evidently suffering from some scrofulous disease like leprosy. The young people are full of action and fun, not at all backward in solicitations for money; the men, however, showing a quiet dignity altogether above begging, although willing to accept a gift if offered. We wandered about on the heights, from which we had glimpses of the fine wooded valleys to the west, where there are at times hunting parties. Descending, we were obliged to pass through some standing corn, much to the annoyance of an Arab who called loudly after us, but who became a little appeased on our giving him a franc or two to make amends for our trespassing. Mr. H. with Marie had hastened on before, leaving Mrs. H. and myself to make our way as best we could.

After lunch, a party of us, consisting of Mr. H., John E., the Doctor of the Hotel, and myself, started

for a long walk, intending to reach the summit of a neighbouring mountain called the Sam San. The afternoon was fine and clear. In a deep valley we passed was an Arab village ; right away below we heard the children's voices at play, and saw the mud huts on the sloping sides of the mountain. I noticed that the huts being thus placed were always dry, and free from the heavy rushes of water after the great torrents of rain which occasionally flood the lower parts of the valleys. We toiled along, leaving Jno. E. to rest here till our return, and after a weary, hard pull, reached the plateau of the Sam San, from which we saw the sea, the Tombeau de la Reine, and the plain of the Metidja stretching right away in the direction of Algiers. We were tired and jaded on arriving at the Hotel. I flung myself on the bed in my room, and vowed I had had enough of climbing ; however, Marie brought out the spirit kettle, and after a delicious cup of tea, I began to revive, and the effects of a good wash prepared me for dinner, and when the bell rang we found ourselves ready for the very enjoyable table d'hôte, which finished the day's work. After dinner, Mr. H. and I, thinking that a warm bath would be beneficial after our hard day's work, went to the baths, where we stayed for twenty minutes or so. The bath was hot, but I enjoyed it, and although I profess not to be a swimmer, yet I could easily swim the length of the bath. It appeared to me the water was exceptionally buoyant. I must

have stayed too long in the water, for I could scarcely walk up to my room ; I can easily conceive it possible for one to stay too long in these hot baths, and be seriously injured by it.

Monday, April 20th. We left Hamman Righa early in the morning, leaving Jno. Ed. and family, who were returning to Algiers later in the day. Our party was composed as before, of Mr. and Mrs. H., Marie, myself, and our half-breed coachman with his three hardy and willing Arab steeds. We started merrily down the winding road, waving our adieus to our friends behind on the balcony of the Hotel, which soon seemed perched high above us as we rapidly descended towards the plain. Our next station was Miliana. We had a long though pleasant drive, being compelled to make a long detour by Bou Medfa, skirting the high mountain of the Zickar, which towered above us to our right the entire distance. Arriving at Miliana about noon, we at once lunched at the Hotel where we intended passing the night. Afterwards strolled through the town which, like most of the larger places, is garrisoned by French troops ; the drums and the bugles giving a lively character to the otherwise quiet, regularly-built, and orderly French looking, newly-built town. It stands at a considerable elevation, and the cold wind made us feel towards evening chilly and cold. From a terrace at the lower part of the town there is a magnificent view of the

country, extending right away to the level plain far below, and behind us towers the gigantic Zickar, forming part of the great Atlas range stretching along North Africa towards the west. There is considerable interest in the place—many Jewish families, easily discerned by their gaudy coloured dresses and unmistakable Jewish physiognomy. There were many children about, full of play and frolic. Schools also we noticed in several streets. One Arab school particularly we stopped to notice ; a number of young lads, about a score, sat on the floor repeating in a see-saw kind of manner texts or sentences of the Koran from boards they held in their hands ; the teacher himself also sat on the ground at one end, drawling out in the same dry, monotonous tone the words which the lads mechanically followed. It appears the Arabs have full liberty to carry out their religion and day school instruction in the way they think best without any interference. It is, however, greatly to the credit of the French, that wherever they have power, schools on the best European models are at once instituted, which must have a great and beneficial effect. We called in at a Jewish Synagogue ; saw some sacred rolls. The Jewish element appears large in all the towns in Algeria, and in all instances is quite distinct and apart from the Arab element. In the shops we noticed Manchester calicoes. The ladies made a few purchases of brass-work, &c. I retired to rest with a racking headache, which continued all the

night ; I attributed this to Mr. H. and I giving our opinion upon the quality of the wine of the country, grown in the immediate neighbourhood ; and the wine being certainly good, both the red and the white, it required, as is generally the case, more tasting than the inferior qualities. The vine is beginning to be very extensively cultivated, and there is no doubt that, as the districts and soil best suited for its growth are gradually found and proved, wine of a fine quality will be extensively produced, and become a most important business in Algeria.

Tuesday, April 21st. Rose soon after four in the morning, strapped our things together, and after a hasty cup of tea were ready for the *diligence* which left at 5 o'clock for the nearest railway station, Affreville. We left our carriage at Miliana, where I bid good-bye to our coachman, to whom I had begun to feel a little attached ; we had had many adventures since leaving Mustapha the week before. He was returning to Souk Ali with the carriage, and on his way would pick up the Arab millstone which we left at Vesoul Benian after leaving Hammam Righa ; forgetting to leave this weighty specimen of ancient industry in the valley at Bou Medfa, we had struggled with it up the long weary mountain to Vesoul, asking a cottager to take care of it till the coachman's return. The day was about breaking as we started from the Hotel and commenced a long, winding, zig-zag descent

to the valley below. The roads were French, consequently in magnificent condition. It is a pleasure to travel on all French roads. We passed many pleasant residences, Miliana evidently being, from its salubrious and commanding position, a favourite resort of the Algerian residents. In about an hour we arrived at the station, Affreville, which is on the main line between Oran and Algiers. We strolled about the station for a short time—the French always give plenty of time in meeting trains—and between six and seven were *en route* for Algiers. We had not proceeded far before we were all obliged to descend from the carriages, the heavy rains of the preceding days having caused an embankment to give way for the length of a hundred yards or more. All the passengers were soon struggling with their baggage towards the train waiting for us beyond the gap in the line. On the Continent I generally find that all the hand baggage a passenger chooses to carry with him in the carriage, he will have to tug with himself on leaving the train, none of the porters appearing to think it their duty to give a helping hand, and here was no exception. We soon got comfortably seated and off again.

It had been part of our programme, after leaving Hammam Righa to see the Cedar Forest, about a couple of days' journey, but the heavy rains had interfered with this arrangement. When the train



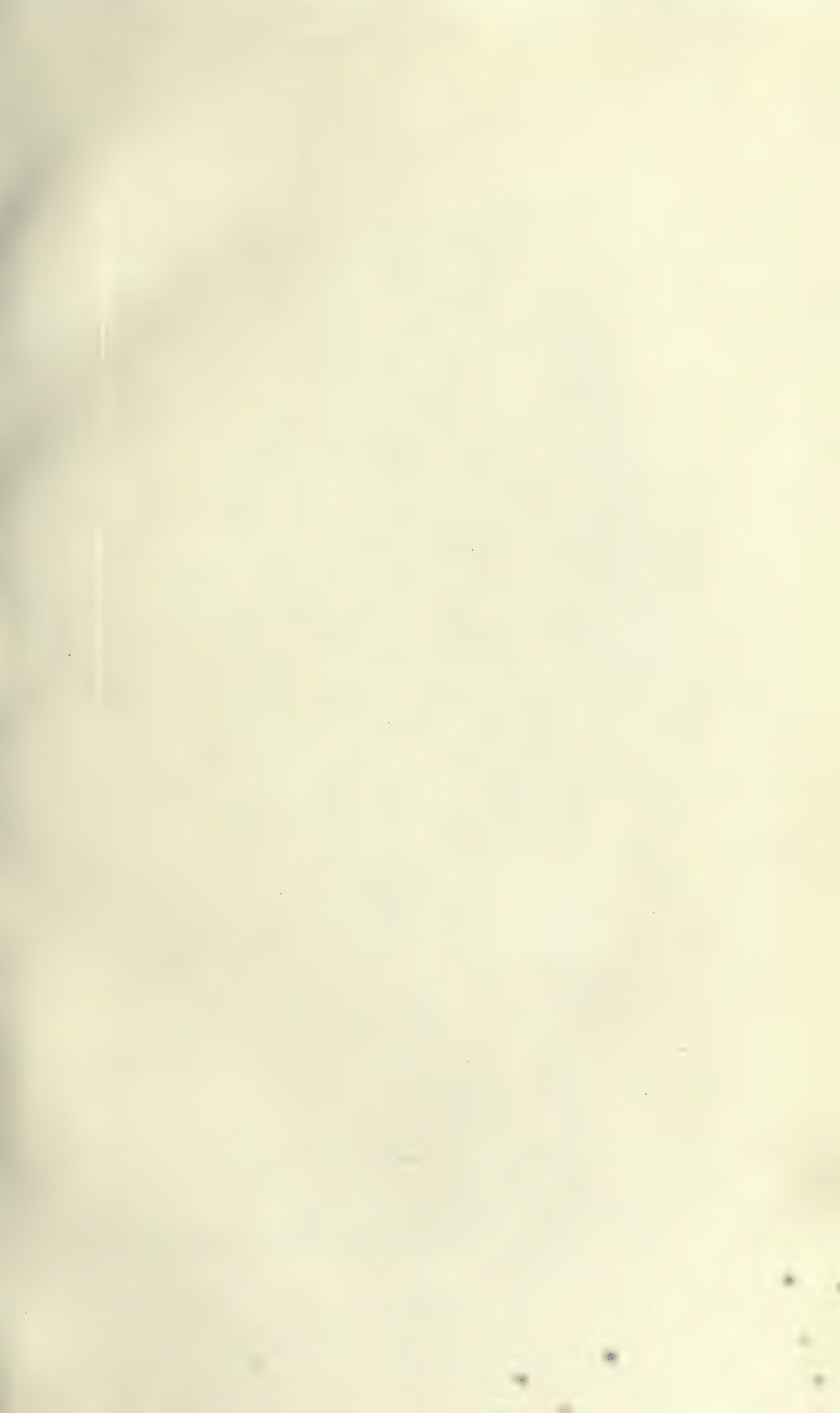


Dar el Ouard.

stopped at Souk Ali we had a word with Jno. Robt. Cox and the Rev. Gardiner Smith, who were both at the station expecting to see us as we passed through. We continued our journey, arriving at Agha about noon. We were soon at home after a very pleasant drive along the steep, winding roads of Mustapha. After lunch I felt freer from my bilious attack, and in the afternoon Marie and I strolled down Ali Sherif's lane to Algiers to make arrangements for our departure by steamer on the morrow. Met with Mr. H. and Jno. E. in the town ; all drove back together to Dar-el-ourd. This residence of Jno. Ed.'s is a very pretty one, and when he gets it completed, and the grounds finished laying out, will be a beautiful spot. Miss Hubner, the governess to the three children, is a lively, chatty German young lady, whom Mrs. Jno. Ed. brought with her when she came here last year. In the evening after dinner Marie and I had to turn to the packing business preparatory to our departure. We had decided, instead of staying longer in Algiers, to make a journey to Biskra, on the verge of the desert, and as Mr. and Mrs. H. were unwilling to make this long journey, I and my wife would have to travel alone. Putting things together, packing the boxes, then having overlooked something, tumbling all out again, and commencing afresh, forgetting this, and overlooking that. All this is one of the drawbacks to travelling. However, after much scrambling, and trial of one's equanimity, things got into shape, and

we turned into bed, casting a glance at the moonlit Mediterranean stretching into the far dim distance below us.

Wednesday, April 22nd. After breakfast made arrangements for our departure. Our friends accompanied us down to the port. As we all drove rapidly away, we could not but feel a little regret at leaving the quiet retreat which had become so familiar to us, perched high on the hill side, and reached by lovely winding lanes, in many places overhung by luxurious and refreshingly shady foliage. Our steamer was quietly waiting in port, ready with steam up for departure. It was a good, fairly appointed vessel for the coasting trade, calling at the various ports along the coast. The office for the registration of luggage closing two or three hours before the starting of the steamer caused us to have my wife's big Noah's Ark specially addressed to Phillippeville, to await us there on our return from Biskra ; this irregularity brought the usual Nemesis, as we found to my vexation later in the journey. After a hurried lunch at one of the restaurants on the quay, we entered a small boat with our luggage, and bidding good-bye to Mr. and Mrs. H. and to Mr. and Mrs. Jno. Ed., we were in a few moments pulling for the steamer, and at noon were steaming gently out to sea, the sun brightly shining, and the sea calm as a lake. Algiers is deeply interesting, picturesque and imposing as seen from the sea ;





General View of Algiers.

the fine, substantial, regularly-built erections which line the entire length of the deep, massive quay, give it an appearance of grandeur and importance which is certainly striking. The old white Arab quarter stretching high up the steep incline behind the new town has the appearance of a vast conglomeration of flat-roofed houses, tumbled together in one interminable mass, tier above tier, piled to the very top ; yet, in the bright sunny climate, clear and distinct, having the appearance of a vast neglected stone heap from some ancient quarry. But we are now fairly on the sea, and Algiers, with its old town and the new, is but a faint line on the horizon. We keep in sight of the coast all the day. There being an average number of passengers, and not having made previous arrangements, Marie had to take the ladies' cabin, and I, along with a Frenchman, occupied two berths in another comfortable little room. The first port we touched was Dellys, a pretty, romantic little place, where we dropped and took up one or two passengers by boat which came alongside with the agent of the company. We were soon off again, and, the night coming on, the mountainous coast stood out darkly, yet distinctly, against the southern sky. I stayed on deck for some time into the evening, watching the stars, the sea, and the far-distant horizon. The dinner at six was fairly well served, but Marie was not equal to it, and soon retired. Late in the evening I sought my berth, and tried to compose myself to sleep.

Thursday, April 23rd. The morning found us close to Bougie, where we were soon anchored. We leave the steamer here for our journey inland, and hailing one of the many small boats about, were soon on the quay. The town, although not large, is of considerable importance, there being a great oil trade here. A great spur of the Atlas range of mountains towers high above the town, forming a prominent and striking landmark from the sea. Strolled up the main street, entering one of the shops to buy a railway guide and some stationery. We sought out the principal carriage proprietor, and after a long, pleasant chat, and inspection of his vehicles, decided upon a carriage not too large, but comfortably accommodating two with our luggage. For the carriage, two horses, and driver, the charge was, for the two days' journey to Setif, 100 francs; however we bargained for 90 francs. Our three lady friends had passed through Bougie, so we were told by the carriage proprietor, the week before, having been detained two days there by the rain. After making all the necessary arrangements and bargaining, and the young fellow our coachman having to breakfast and get ready the horses, we returned by boat to steamer, breakfasted, then put our luggage together, leaving the "Noah's Ark" to continue its sea voyage to Philippeville alone. We had enjoyed the stay in our comfortable floating hotel, and had we been continuing our sea voyage, should have no doubt rubbed acquaintance with some of our

Road near Bougie.







General View of Bongie.

fellow-passengers. Had a little chat with a young fellow from Benirs, who owned land near to Souk Ali ; he was, along with his young Spanish wife, on his wedding tour ; they had embarked at Algiers and were visiting the places of interest along the coast.

After bidding good-bye to the captain and others, we were with our luggage soon alongside the quay, where our carriage was ready waiting for us, and after exchanging further remarks and receiving instructions about the journey from the respectable and fair-dealing proprietor, we were speeding rapidly away, leaving the town, the port, and the steamer all behind. The morning was beautifully fine. We journeyed for two hours or more along the shore and at the foot of the mountains, having Bougie and the steamer in view all the time. Bougie is most beautifully situated, like a nest at the foot of the tremendous headland above it, stretching far into the sea. We turn now towards the mountains, leaving the sea behind ; the scenery is bold and interesting, well wooded, with extensive undergrowth of brushwood ; we were told exciting tales of the savage attacks of wild beasts upon the cattle in this district. The hyenas are, I suppose, common here ; a fine jackal ran across the road, swiftly mounting the high bank on the opposite side. Our coachman told us it was not safe to pass the night or to be travelling in this part after dark. After a time we approach the entrance to the Chabet Pass. This

was one of the sights which induced us to make this tour. Shortly after leaving the sea we had 'descended' at a wayside inn to lunch, and feed the horses. It appeared to be a well-frequented place, where all travellers must halt, but where they are not sure of having fresh meat to lunch. The thoughtful carriage proprietor had given instructions to the coachman to take a good beef-steak with him, which was duly handed to the cheerful dame immediately on our arrival, and was beautifully cooked with potatoes while we strolled in the garden behind, now and again regaling ourselves with the oranges which remained, though late in the season, on the orange trees around us. By-and-bye we were told lunch was ready, and for the first time in our lives we lunched high up in the branches of a fine tree, just in front of the house. The table was laid at a considerable elevation on a platform arranged amongst the branches, and reached by a ladder. We were quite safe and comfortable, and a very good lunch was served us, such as the French alone can give wherever we find them, and under whatever circumstances. We were in no haste to commence our journey, and quite willing our horses should rest as well as ourselves. However the coachman told us we must hasten on to reach our first day's stage before evening. We were soon again seated in our cosy carriage, and hastening on for the Pass which we hoped to reach and pass through before dark. It was a beautiful afternoon, and we thoroughly enjoyed



Entrance to the Chabet Pass.





Gorges du Chabet.

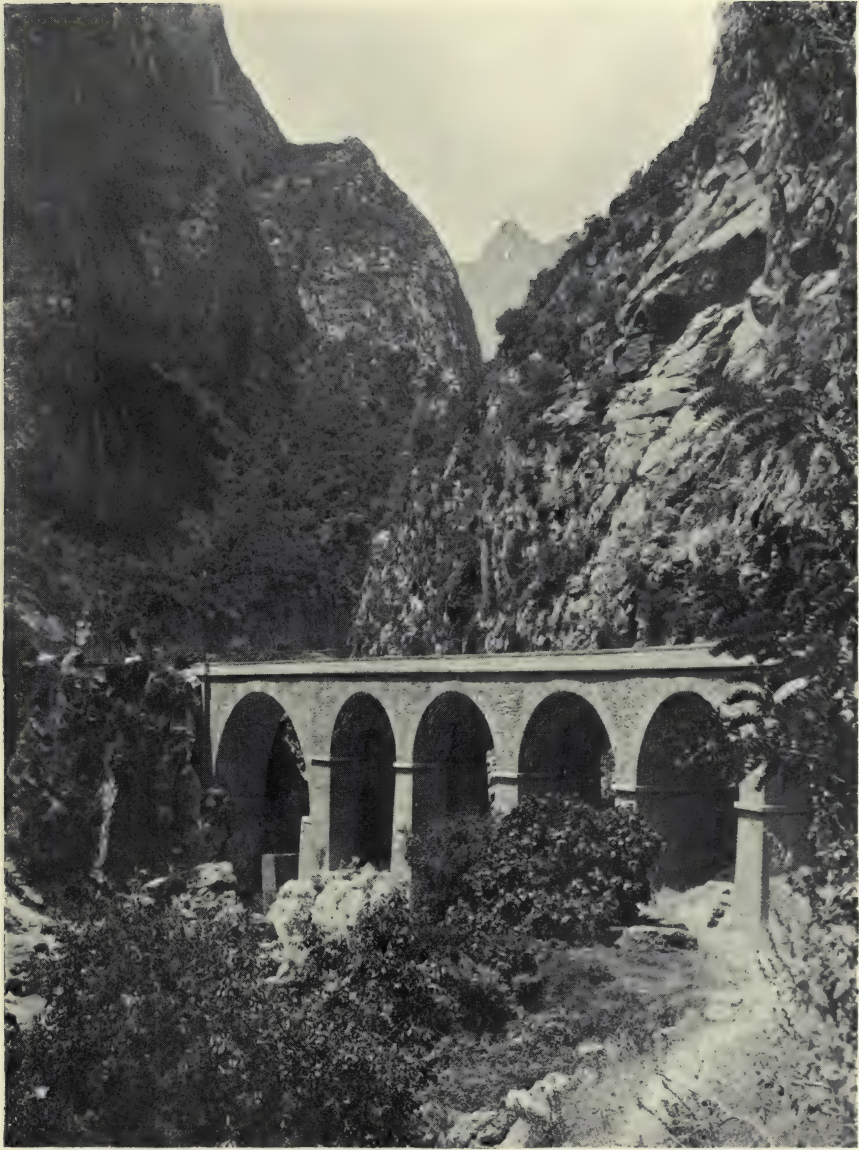
the ever-changing scenery as we got nearer the heart of the mountains.

It might be five o'clock as we entered the Chabet Pass, which for four or five miles cleaves the Atlas in its highest and boldest range. The mountains seem to have been suddenly torn asunder, leaving a vast cleft through which the magnificent French road winds all the way under the mighty, and almost appalling rocks which shoot up on either hand to the height of 6000 feet. The road in many places is actually hewn out of the side of perpendicular rock, the river Agroun rushing and boiling at a vast depth below us. The sun can only cast its beams into the depths of this Pass at noon, it is so deep and narrow. It is well worthy a visit for anyone passing a time in Algeria, as it may be considered the most wonderful pass, taking its entire length, in Europe. We stopped in amazement to look from different points of view at the vast rents in the solid rock through which we passed. The sun had set long before we emerged from the Pass, but the moon, nearly at full, gave a weird and strange appearance to the immense and towering walls of rock around us. We gladly entered the small hotel placed just at the end of the Pass, and after a slight repast we strolled out to see the place. The moon was now a brilliant object in the sky ; we walked along the road a short distance, looked into an Arab hut where a number of Arabs were engaged in

some kind of entertainment. There was a deathly stillness round about as we strolled in the direction of the Pass through which we had lately passed, the high peaks standing in grim ruggedness against the sky. We returned to our hotel, having to pass to our bedroom by steps outside. We were told that three English ladies had passed the night here just a week ago, so we are still in the footsteps of our friends. We had a comfortable room, and thankful were we that so far we had arrived safely. The deep stillness around us was broken by the hum of voices below, but sweet sleep came to end the eventful day.

At dinner we had some conversation with a young Frenchman who was engaged superintending some works in the Pass. Kharata, where is situated our hotel, is just outside the great Pass, and forms the first day's journey between Bougie and Setif, where the railway can be joined.

Friday, April 24th. Rose early, and after our *café-au-lait* the carriage was brought to the door and again were *en route*, favoured with a beautiful morning. We passed close by an ostrich farm, and the road being here elevated we had an opportunity of seeing the big birds marching about in the open pens. We had not proceeded far when suddenly our coachman stopped as if something was wrong; he appeared rather excited, and on being questioned



Road through the Chabet Pass.

replied that he had lost ten francs which had been given him by his master for his expenses ; he fumbled in his pockets saying that it must have been lost through a hole in his pockets, but I insisted on examining the pockets and found no hole, and I began to have a strong impression from his manner that it was simply a ruse to get money. I became more convinced of this as we got along. When he saw that it didn't answer he calmed down, and soon seemed to forget his loss. The country now is much changed—decidedly tamer, bleak, bare hills succeeding one another. We pass Takitount, where there is a hot spring and mines, shortly arriving at a little village called Ouricia, where we stop to lunch about noon. The little auberge or wayside inn was kept by a Frenchman who had been in the army ; he, along with his wife and mother-in-law, had settled down here, and was farming a considerable amount of land. They were a very interesting family, and evidently were prospering, as they seemed thrifty, managing and careful. The old lady, the mother, was knitting ; she looked comfortable and happy with her daughter and son-in-law. The school-mistress appeared to be on visiting terms, as she came in and made herself at home with them. The host spoke very disparagingly of the Arabs—"they were an idle, lazy, thieving lot." I expect he couldn't get much work out of those he employed on his land. The country appears to be gradually getting opened up by settlers, who are

encouraged by the French Government by concessions of portions of land. We had an excellent *déjeuner*, commencing with an omelette such as Frenchmen only make, and ending with *café*; and after a further pleasant chat with this rather interesting household, we start on our journey in a burning sun. We wind round the higher hills, and gradually get into a less hilly and still tamer country as we approach Setif. Now and again a young fellow passed our carriage whom we had seen many times since leaving Bougie; he appeared to be keeping up with us, which he managed to do by taking short cuts, turning up unexpectedly when we thought him far away behind. He was evidently an acquaintance of our coachman, who told us that his friend had a few days before brought a horse from Setif to Bougie, and was now returning on foot. We were not quite easy in our minds about him, and the question came to us often, whether it was safe to be travelling alone as we were through a wild and lonely country, where we were entirely in the hands of the driver, who for anything we knew might be in collusion with a number of the wild, roving Arabs such as we were constantly passing. However, we got along quietly enough, arriving at Setif about four o'clock in the afternoon, where we dismissed our coachman. We descended at the Hotel de France in the main street, and after being shown our bedroom and having a refreshing wash, walked out to see the place. Setif is an important place, with a large

garrison of soldiers ; a fine mosque stands at the end of the street. At the table d'hôte were a large number of officers belonging to the regiments stationed here. The hotel was fairly good, with the exception of the water closets, which, as in all these hotels, are simply abominable.

From Setif we could now take the train direct to Constantine, and as we felt rather unwell it became a question as to whether we should prosecute our journey to Biskra, which would take up four or five days, or pass on at once to Constantine ; we decided to leave the matter till morning, when it would depend upon as to how we felt. The day's work appeared to have made us weary and dispirited. I took the precaution to get my spirit kettle filled with methylated spirit. This kettle has been at many times a great comfort to us, as often in the early morning, or again before dinner in the evening, one has been able to make a refreshing cup of tea.

Saturday, April 25th. We felt much better this morning on awaking, and consequently in better spirits, so we resolved to carry out our original intention of seeing Biskra and the desert. We were up by 4-30, had our *café* brought to our room, and as the omnibus left for the station in time for the 5-35 morning train, we had not a moment to lose, but at once plunged into dressing, *café-au-lait*, and packing.

There were four other travellers leaving, bound for Constantine. The station was outside the town, from which we started punctually, and managing to have a compartment to ourselves we had a most comfortable journey as far as the junction 'El Guerrah,' which we reached about 9 a.m. Here we changed carriages for Batna, arriving about one o'clock in the afternoon. We must have gained a considerable elevation, for it was very much colder than at El Guerrah. Went to the Hotel des Etrangers, just by the Romish Church, and close by the booking office, where the *diligence* starts for Biskra. We secured our places in the *banquette* for the morning, then strolled out to look at the town, which seemed much in the style and character of Setif. A few miles away stands the ancient city of Lambesse, where are perhaps the best preserved ruins in Algeria of the Roman era; we did not appear to be desirous of delaying our journey by visiting this place. The corn-market was very interesting; the Arabs from long distances were here in large numbers with the corn they had to sell. They would sit upon their sacks quietly waiting purchasers, and, like farmers all the world over, each one considered his produce as good as his neighbours', and stuck out for the same price. There was more animation in this Batna corn market than in any I had seen elsewhere. It would appear to be an important centre for the district. There were many agents and corn merchants about, and it was very evident the Arabs were not going to

sell their corn for nothing. I marched amongst them pretty freely, and, like the rest, examined and tasted the corn here and there as if I also were a buyer. One is struck with the black-eyed, tall, dignified Arab as he moves about ; to me he possesses wonderful interest. I had some interesting conversation with a French corn merchant from Constantine ; he told me how difficult these Arabs were to deal with ; he pointed out to me one who had been reclining on his sacks of corn since early morning, and although he had had a fair price bid, yet because it was a few sous lower than his neighbour's, he would not sell, but would probably load again his camels or mules for a market taking him probably a couple of days to reach. This corn merchant told me he had himself bid this same Arab a fair market price several times for his produce, and the only reply he got was "chantez plus haut." I was much amused with this sample of the figurative and hyperbolic language in which the Arabs so excel. When a bargain is struck, immediately the corn is measured by the officially-appointed agent of the market, duly certified, and, shortly, the five-franc pieces of the corn merchant are transferred to the leathern purse in the folds of the belt which the Arab wraps round his waist.

Time, to an Arab, appears of little consequence. A great deal of time is spent in travelling from one market to another. We often pass long files of Arabs

with their heavily corn-laden mules and camels slowly wending their way along, themselves marching alongside, now and again administering sundry blows, accompanied with some strong Arab epithet to the obstinate beasts, evidently as oblivious of time as their masters, preferring to endure a fair amount of kicks and curses before leaving the succulent tufts of herbage at which they were constantly nibbling along the wayside.

After some time spent amongst the busy crowd in this stirring market-place, we hastened home to our hotel to dinner. As usual, nearly all the company were French officers belonging to the garrison of the town. There is unmistakable evidence that the country is strongly held by the French. A short walk after dinner, and then retired to rest, the night coming in very cold.

Sunday, April 26th. Rose early, ordered our *café* to be brought to our bedroom. Soon had our reduced baggage in order; the "Noah's Ark" would by this be tranquilly lying at Philippeville, and we now deemed it necessary to still further diminish our travelling gear, so we left at the hotel (as we should have to return by Batna) the large black bag, stuffed to repletion by sundry articles; also my top-hat, which was always in the way except when on my head, and kept simply a small bag, a strapped rug, and the little

hand-bag for the barometer, compass, and other little knick-knacks. Having still some time on our hands before starting, we entered the Catholic Church opposite, which, as all churches should be, stands open from early morn to eventide. Not a soul was present when we entered ; we quietly wended our way past the empty chairs towards the altar, then silently kneeling before God, asked His blessing upon us in this strange land, praying that He would protect and safely bring us back from our uncertain and perilous wanderings.

“ *They who truly seek me, shall surely find me.*”

God is ever present to those who truly seek Him. We felt the occasion one of solemnity, and were thankful we had entered the sacred building.

In the main street stood the *diligence* with its six sturdy horses, and soon we were seated in our places on the *banquette*. The rest of the passengers were mostly Arabs, one fine fellow occupying the other seat on the *banquette* with us. The driver, a Maltese, looked a terribly fiery fellow ; the incessant and impassioned flow of language hurled at his horses was something to be remembered ; and really the willing and vigorous brutes needed neither whip nor curses, for they sped along gallantly, the long whip of the driver ever and anon cracking like pistol-shots over their heads. In this style we left Batna, a number of idlers round about watching the start. We made rapid progress,

and were now fairly *en route* for Biskra and the desert. The *diligence* was timed to start at 8-30 a.m. Shortly after leaving Batna we pass to our right a lofty range of mountains covered with cedar forests, many of the trees being of gigantic proportions and of great age. We thoroughly enjoyed the position in which we found ourselves on the *banquette* of the *diligence*, from which we had a fine view of the country as we rapidly drove along. Batna being at a considerable height above sea level, gave our journey a gradual descent along the far-extending plains, bounded by the distant mountain chain of a brown-red appearance, baked and burnt by the powerful sun. We had a fearless driver, who dashed along with his six horses in a style which left no uncertainty as to what he would do if any unfortunate vehicle should venture to stop the road ; the consequence was that the camels, horses, donkeys, Arabs, and every movable thing jumped at once on one side at the sound of the terrible crack of the long lasso-like whip signalling our approach, as if Mephistopheles himself were coming. We carried the mails, and it was interesting to see the people turn up in many a solitary place, expecting to receive news, which the driver himself (for he carried the bag) patronisingly handed down after pulling up his team. At some places he simply shook his head at the expectant groups as he galloped furiously past them. We should change horses about five times during the journey ; at one of the changing-places we descended



El Kantara from the North.



General View of El Kantara.

and had an excellent lunch about noon. About the middle of the afternoon we arrived at El Kantara. After the dreary, monotonous country passed through, this little place was indeed refreshing. We simply stopped here to change horses ; while this was being done I strolled about, leaving Marie up aloft. The place just about the hotel was very pretty. The hotel looked clean and comfortable ; it is a kind of half-way house between Batna and Biskra. I was attracted by a rose-tree full of lovely yellow roses, just in front of the hotel. I had a few words with an Englishman returning from Biskra by the return *diligence*, which was also changing horses here.

El Kantara is most picturesquely situated in the great chasm which here breaks a high chain of mountains running east and west. This great rent in the rocks, through which is a magnificent view of the far-extending plains beyond, is by the Arabs called the Golden Gate of the Sahara, and also the Mouth of the Desert. It was here we first saw the palm trees, where there are about 20,000. These palm or date trees, as they are indifferently called, are striking objects to the stranger, with their long, spreading leaves, which you at once associate with the land of the sun and the Bible.

The *diligence* being now ready, we were soon away past the mud houses, the palm trees, and this curious

cleft in the mountain chain. The roads up to El Kantara had been good, but now we were made to feel the difference between good and bad roads, the latter being simply no roads at all, the *diligence* in many places lumbering along over the hard, stony, dry, acrid ground, the driver picking his way as best he could, so as not to be upset. In many places we saw signs of cultivation; wherever water can be carried, there the 'desert blossoms as the rose,' and it was deeply-interesting to see how a small stream could be utilized by the use of long troughs with little sluices to draw off the water, and then closed, that the stream may fertilize the next neighbour's ground. Many a bright, lovely patch of green gladdened our eyes as we passed along.

But these signs of agricultural life became fewer as we passed on, and as the sun got lower in the west the country appeared to stretch away in dim monotony and dreariness, and the jolting of the *diligence* became alarming to Marie. The journey had been relieved by the frequent change of horses, and by the two or three intervals of lunch, dinner, &c., round which a considerable amount of interest seemed to cling; but now, as we anxiously looked towards the end of this long, weary journey, the hours passed slowly by, and the *diligence* seemed often in great danger of being tumbled over as we steered over and through the dry, lumpy ground. The evening appeared closing darkly



Date Palm.



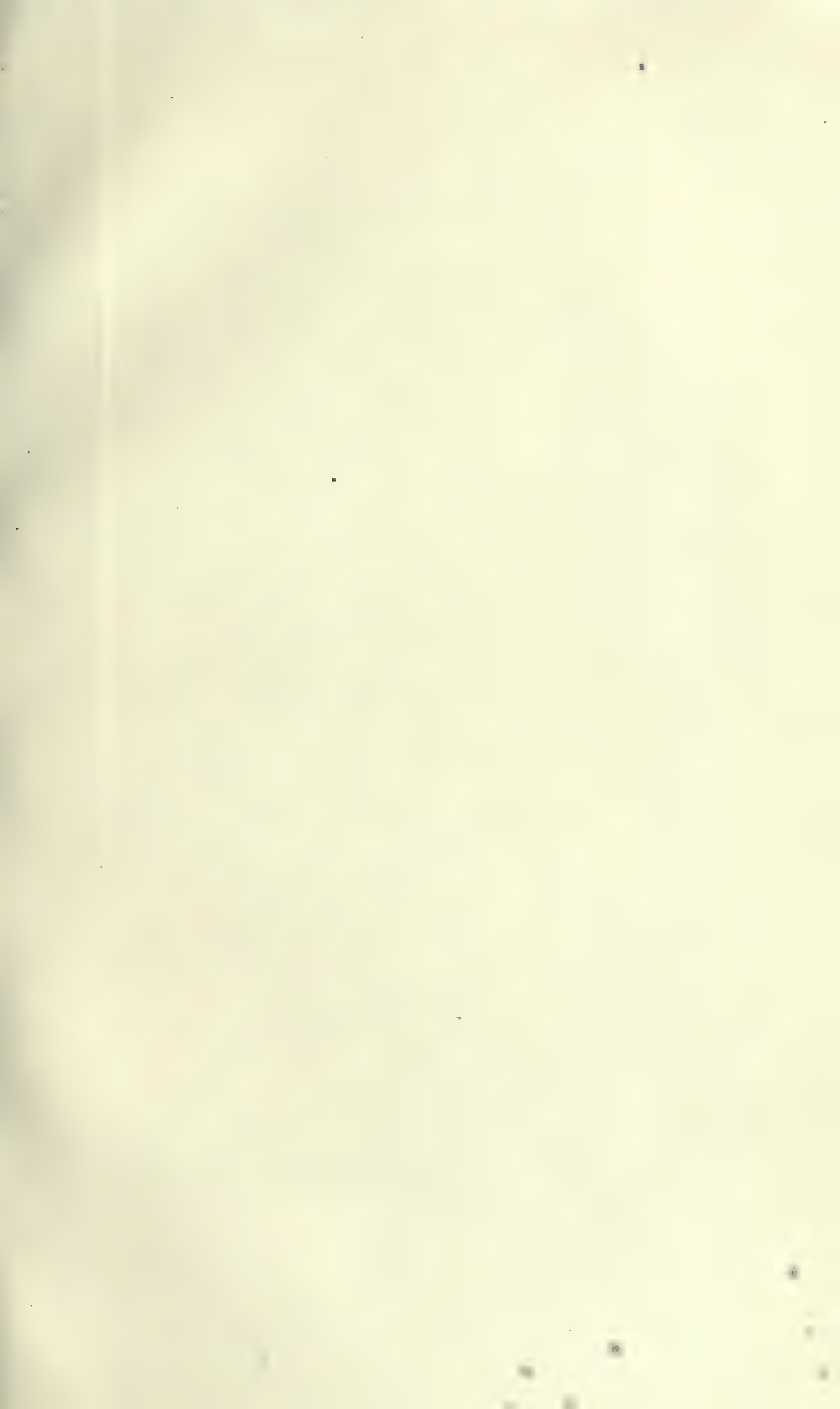


Moorish Café.

in, with lightning flashes darting from the heavy clouds on the horizon, the threatening thunder growling ever and anon. The wind beginning to rise, fanned us with warm blasts from the desert we were approaching. Altogether the scene became more weird and lonely, but we rapidly moved along like a ship at sea. For the last hour or two the jolting of the *diligence* had become very uncomfortable, for we were tumbled about as much as on the Mediterranean, there being neither road nor even any semblance of roads. We rolled over this immense plain of rough, uneven ground like a boat at sea skirting the waves, sometimes half over in one direction, then a sudden jerk kicking us almost over on the other side. I certainly began to fear we should after all come to grief, but the driver, in spite of his cursing, and the swagger of his cracking whip, had the willing horses fully under control, and managed them admirably. A little earlier we had been enlivened by a group of Arab boys from a neighbouring encampment, who ran out to meet the *diligence*, turning head over heels with wonderful celerity, like their brother Arabs in the streets of London, striving to make, like them also, an honest penny.

But now the sun had set, and the darkness coming rapidly on, we all wished for the journey's end. The driver also appeared anxious, as big drops of rain now and again struck us. The strange, peculiar sing-

song wail of the Arabs in the *diligence*, singing snatches of their native songs, sometimes alone, sometimes in chorus, with the weariness and anxiety, gave a feeling of almost unearthly interest to the entire surroundings. By-and-bye we came suddenly to what appeared a river, and now we at once saw why the driver had been anxious, for had there been heavy rains on the distant mountains we could not have passed here. As we slowly descended towards the brink, the driver cast a hurried look across, then immediately jumped down, giving the reins to his companion, and ran down to the water, which he decided was fordable. Only a week before, the *diligence* had been partly carried down the stream, and three horses out of the six were drowned. The moon was scarcely yet risen, and in the dim twilight we could discern on the opposite bank a number of figures in flowing robes. These were Arabs who had come out from Biskra to await the *diligence* and carry on their shoulders any of the travellers who were afraid of crossing the river in the *diligence*. Many of our travellers availed themselves of this mode of transit, and were carried by the Arabs across, but the driver having said there was no danger, as the water was not high, and also as my wife could not make up her mind to being squeezed by, and perched on the shoulders of an Arab in the middle of a rushing stream, there was nothing else for it but sticking to the *diligence*, and now there was no time for parleying.





The Sahara from the Col de Sfa.

Crack went the whip, and in a moment the horses plunged into the river ; a few seconds saw us in the middle, with the water up to the horses' bellies, but they splashed along in splendid style, a minute or two bringing us high and dry on the opposite bank. This is a most ugly part of the journey after a heavy fall of rain, the river rises so rapidly. If the river is swollen more than usual, it is safer to trust to the backs of the Arabs, in which case the driver risks himself, the horses and *diligence* alone. Now we begin to ascend the Col de Sfa, the last range of rocks before coming to the open desert. One steep ascent seemed to be utterly impossible to mount—it was a simple dead drag, with a full, sudden stop every few minutes. The poor horses struggled faithfully and well, and by-and-bye we got to the top, when they dashed forward with renewed vigour, and shortly we were on the plain. The moon was now fairly up, nearly full, a grand object in the sky, all the country having to me just the appearance as if it were lit up by the electric light.

We now saw lights in the distance in the midst of a dark mass, resting on the vast level plain like an island ; that is Biskra, and soon we entered its white-walled streets, every object, in the clear moonlight, standing boldly out with distinctly outlined shadows, the high walls which form the streets, like in all Eastern towns, giving a strange sense of seclusion to the

passing traveller. Figures in long, white, flowing robes were flitting to and fro, but a deadly stillness reigned around. It would be after ten o'clock, but we have now finished our long, weary journey, and the *diligence* suddenly stops at the corner of a street in the midst of a little group, to whom the arrival of the *diligence* was an event. We rapidly descended, and were marched to the hotel a little further on, the Grand Hotel du Sahara, where we were met by the pleasant-looking French host, who told us he had rooms for us, and also that then the hotel would be full. We were shown to our little room, containing two small beds, red-tiled floor, no drapery, but although bare, it was neat, plain, and comfortable. After our long, fatiguing ride, it looked like a little paradise, and I think never before were two little cribs so prized by any weary, belated travellers as were those two beds of ours. We had evidently got into a warmer country, for the very tiles on the floor were warm. However, as one stretched oneself out between the comfortable sheets, a feeling of gratitude welled up in one's heart towards "the man who invented beds."

Monday, April 27th. Awoke refreshed and well, the bright, cheery light streaming through the window, making us at once acquainted with the daylight appearance and contents of our little ground-floor bedroom. An Arab brought us coffee and bread, which we took in our bedroom ; milk and butter are



General View of Bishra.



Street Scene in Biskra.

not to be had every day, so that often the black coffee and dry bread must be taken without any additional luxury. The hotel is not large, but fairly comfortable, with a small inner court or garden, the trees forming a grateful shade from the powerful rays of the sun. There were lots of Arabs about to show one round the town and places of interest, but only a few were specially allowed to worry the visitors of the hotel with their offers of service. One young fellow stuck to us and succeeded in claiming us for our first tour in the town. All along the front of the hotel runs a long arcade, which, affording shelter from the sun and continuing the whole length of the boulevard in front, forms a delightful promenade. The present Biskra is a well laid-out town on French principles of street architecture ; roads at right angles, and, in the principal parts, uniformity of architecture. We visited the Chateau Landon, a house and grounds most beautifully arranged, and laid out with great taste ; in the grounds are trees and shrubs of endless variety, and from all parts of the world if the specimen could possibly be acclimatised. The house is furnished in Moorish style, reflecting great taste and judgment on the proprietor. Mr. Landon was away, but the attendants were kind and civil. Alongside the estate runs the desert, bare and sandy. You stand on the low wall ; behind, you have the richest vegetation, tropical plants of luxuriant growth. You may jump down on to the ground before you, and you are at once on the barren,

burnt-up soil, the desert, like the sea, stretching right away to the horizon. One is struck with the wonderful effect of water, for it is that which makes the oasis with the accompanying palms and rich vegetation. As the eye glances over the vast, dreary expanse, one easily realizes the blessing of the promise, "*The desert shall blossom as the rose.*" We returned through the Negro village, built of mud-huts of the ordinary sun-burnt bricks. The women were mostly engaged in spinning and weaving in the most primitive fashion, passing the ball of yarn or weft by hand through the suspended warp. The spinning also is in keeping with everything else. The woman holds under her arm a tuft or small bundle of wool, from which she draws with her fingers a thread which is attached to a spindle rapidly revolving, and which hangs suspended from her hand. As she pulls away the fibres of wool, it is dexterously twisted into shape, and the revolving spindle gives it at once the necessary twist. When about two or three feet of yarn has been drawn out, the spindle is lightly jerked up, and gathers round itself the thread thus spun, and this is continued until sufficient is wound round the spindle or bobbin, the woman all the time standing or walking about. There were many plots of garden patches cultivated by the negroes here, the water being carried about by the simple irrigation system of small cuttings or dykes. Wherever water can be carried, rich vegetation follows, and whatever labour is put into the soil in those circumstances is always well repaid.



Road to Sidi Barhat.





Market Scene in Biskra.

We hastened home to *dejeuner*, which was at 11 o'clock. A little table by the door having been allotted to us in the *salle a manger*, we kept to it during our stay, and having it to ourselves we got to feel quite at home and comfortable when, after many a weary ramble, we found ourselves cosily seated with our tired feet resting under its white cloth.

In the afternoon strolled through the market, which, like most of the other buildings, is a large, quadrangular structure, enclosing a large, open space, with an arcade running round the inner side. In the open were sheep, camels, and mules, with a motley crowd of chattering Arabs; the arcade giving shelter from rain and sun to numerous groups of petty merchants selling the usual innumerable articles of domestic use, with toys and gimcracks in abundance. We bought a few of the Arab flutes, a simple, hollow reed, open at both ends, with five holes for fingering; the blowing is a difficult matter to an amateur, as it is played by blowing over the open end, and which I could not possibly manage, easy as it seemed to be. I had often seen and heard the Arab shepherds making their plaintive, wailing music from these rude musical instruments. The market-place, like the market-places of old, is the place above all others where there is always something to see or hear, and the lounging, idle, gossiping people mix in and among the buyers and sellers of the ever-changing groups. Dinner at six. As at most of the

towns we have passed through, we found here also a large sprinkling of the military element, there being several officers from the garrison who evidently dined here. There were only two English people besides ourselves, Dr. and Mrs. Parr, who sat at a table at the other side of the room, and with whom, of course, after the usual English fashion, it took a couple of days or so of reconnoitring, before venturing to exchange words. In the corner behind my wife, sat a stout French lady with her son, a young soldier on furlough. She was talking of having a three days' journey of mule riding, which I didn't envy her. The dinner seemed always an agreeable change after the day's excitement, as the various incidents had to be talked over; and then the speculations on the company about us, in which one indulges when amongst entire strangers and far away from home, the entire freedom of remarks which we make to each other lending a peculiar interest and charm. After dinner we were conducted by an Arab guide to see the places of amusement, &c. We looked in at a low-roomed building where a large number of Arabs were sat on the floor attentively listening to the reading by an elderly-looking Arab of some document or manuscript before him; we were told this was a kind of literary society, preaching, and searching into ancient manuscripts—in fact a kind of literary club. In all these assemblages of the Arabs there is always an amount of order, silence, and decorum, which cannot

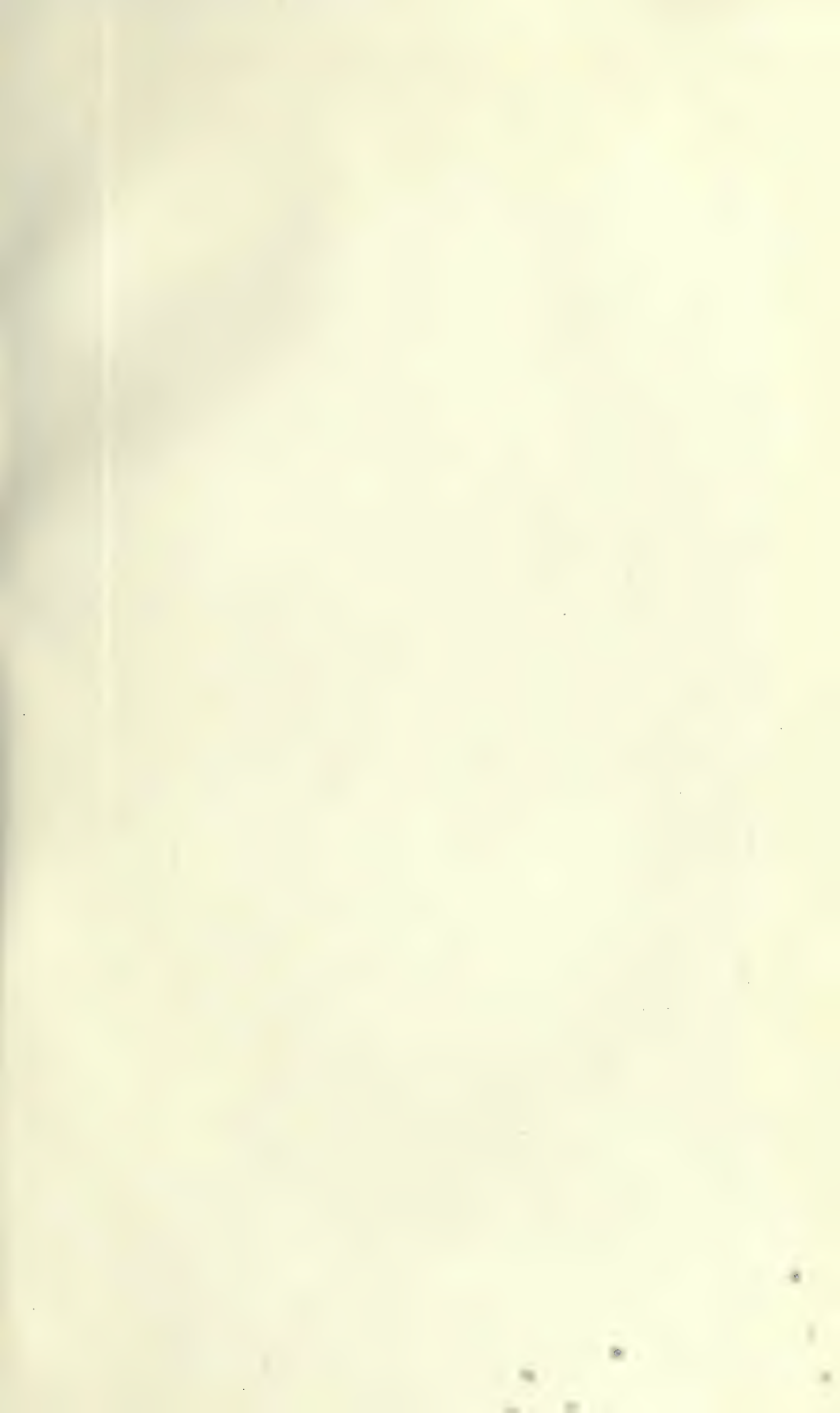
but strike one with a sense of dignity in all they do. We were next taken to a *Café Dansant*, where were being performed a series of dances by Arab girls, of a style, character and movement which would scarcely be considered the proper thing in highly respectable society. In these far-away places, it appears to me that travellers often find themselves in the midst of company and scenes which they would never venture to approach if at home. Called at a *café* kept by an intelligent Arab who spoke a little French, and whose acquaintance I had made in the long *diligence* ride from Batna ; he made us take two cups of *café*, and insisting on considering us his guests, would accept no payment. There were several Arabs sat round about, some sleeping, some smoking, the only beverage handed about being coffee. It was a dark, lofty room ; from the ceiling was suspended a lamp which indistinctly outlined the dark visages of the motley group ; one of them reclining on the raised divan which ran round the room, appeared to be fairly entitled to the title of 'travelled Arab,' as he informed us he had been as far north as Paris. Very few of the Arabs knew more than a few broken sentences of French, and our Arab guide, who spoke French well, had often to intervene in making the Arabic and French amalgamate. In the midst of our talk, suddenly the lamp went out, leaving the place in total darkness, made more distinct by the bright moonlight outside, clearly distinguishable through the chinks and holes in the

door and windows. For a moment Marie and I were a little alarmed, as we were in strange company, but soon a candle was lighted, and the person most concerned was our host, who no doubt felt it was scarcely the proper thing to allow his guests to talk without light. By-and-bye we took our departure, inviting our host to take *café* with us at our hotel, but on arrival I found that both he and our guide preferred to drink our health in beer rather than *café*. It is anything but satisfactory to find that as so-called civilization pushes forward amongst the races of simple and primitive habits, the cursed taste for strong drink rapidly follows, although the Arabs are perhaps the least affected by this curse, which may apply also to all Mohammedans, whose principles of faith are strongly against it.

Tuesday, April 28th. On throwing back the shutters found a heavy and steady downpour of rain, which however did not continue long, and in a very short time all traces of it had passed, except the delightful freshness imparted to the morning air. Our coffee and bread being handed in through the window, and placed on the little table close by, we sat down to it, and began to think that, after all, our frugal morning repast was very enjoyable. Engaged a tall, pleasant, chatty Arab to conduct us to old Biskra. He told us that he had been at the battle of Tel-el-Kebir; he appeared a fine, intelligent fellow, and was certainly



Old Bishva.





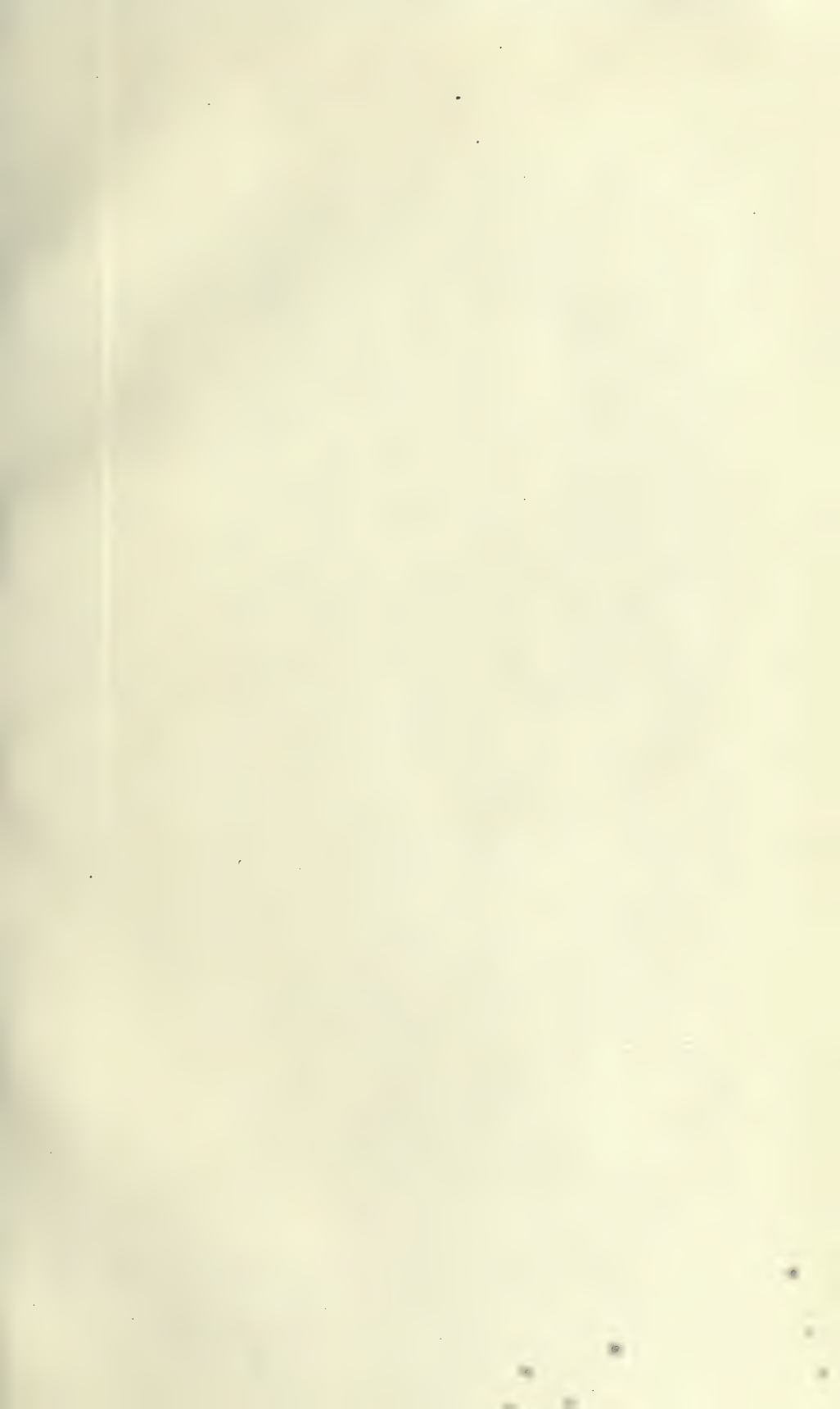
Street in Old Biskra.

the most agreeable Arab we met with as guide. Old Biskra is now nothing but mounds of ruins, showing how these places, when once ruined and deserted, soon become one vast rubbish heap, and by the combined action of the rain, the wind, the sun and the sand, these old places built of sun-dried bricks become, in a comparatively short time, simply bare elevations on the dreary level plain.

Old Biskra being about a mile or so from the modern town, we returned along some queer-looking lanes between mud-brick walls along a water-course. Entered a low building in which corn was being ground, the millstones being driven in the most primitive fashion by the running stream ; we were much interested in this little corn-mill. The people appeared fairly happy, and generally engaged in some occupation or another—spinning, weaving, or working in the ground wherever the water could be carried by the innumerable small rivulets or branches from the larger stream. The young Arabs clustered round us, laughing and chattering as we passed along, apparently pleased we should be interested in their doings. The Arab boys are all interesting and intelligent looking. One little chap caught the eye of my wife ; she immediately turned to me and said, " Look ! " On turning to look at the lad I was startled, for at once I saw what she meant. In the laughing boy before us, with his dark, sparkling eyes, stood the very picture of my

own boy, Fred. The likeness was striking. We asked his name, he replied Ahmed. The lad was well pleased with our acknowledgments, which we made him for Fred's sake, and so on we passed and reached our hotel in time for *dejeuner*. After lunch we engaged a carriage in charge of a Frenchman from the hotel, to take us to see the 'Source d'Oumach,' a spring of water issuing from the base of mountains forming the boundary of the desert plain to the south-west, distant about ten miles. The principal objects of interest were the large dunes or mountains of sand to be seen here. The ride, like most about here, was monotonous, relieved by the terrible jolting over the hard, lumpy ground, that again relieved by the heavy driving over the long stretches of yielding sand. The sand is very fine, quite suitable for use instead of blotting paper ; my wife being anxious to bring part of the desert of Sahara to Europe, we filled a pocket handkerchief, which of course helped in bulk and weight to swell our travelling gear on our journey homewards. We are now approaching the sand mountains, which indeed are strikingly wonderful, rising, some of them, to a great height, having the appearance of vast snow drifts, with ridges as sharply defined as if cut with a knife, and formed entirely of the pure, fine sand of the desert.* We hasten on along the base of these

* I remember when at Tenby, South Wales, last year, being deeply interested in watching the growth of the sand drifts there, skirting the entrance to the now dry





Travellers in the Desert.

sand hills, leaving them to our right, and by-and-by get amongst scrub, rough grass and reeds, and in a depression close by us we see the so-called source or spring issuing from the rock. My wife got down and we wandered about in the long grass, she being intent on gathering a quantity of the peculiar dry grass and weeds so plentiful here. Our coachman informed us that it would be well to be making our homeward journey, so we mounted the carriage, and quietly gazed upon the dreary landscape ; the mountains bounded the west, the Aures group the north-east, but right away to the south and south-east stretched the vast sea-like plain, bounded only by the horizon. We arrived at the hotel in time for dinner, where we were again soon comfortably seated at our little table, fully enjoying the rest and refreshment after the day's labours. After dinner we had a pleasant walk under the palms in the long promenade in front. The moon

estuary which formerly stretched far inland ; Arthur (my son-in-law) and I having scrambled to the top, were struck with the cloudy appearance of the ridge as it stood out against the bright sky behind. On closely observing we saw that this haze or cloud of only a few inches in depth was composed of millions of particles of fine sand dancing against the sky-line, and as we traced the movement downwards from the ridge, we could clearly discern the action of the gentle breeze upon the surface of the sand, driving the loose, light atoms up the incline until the top is reached, where they settle, or fall on the other side.

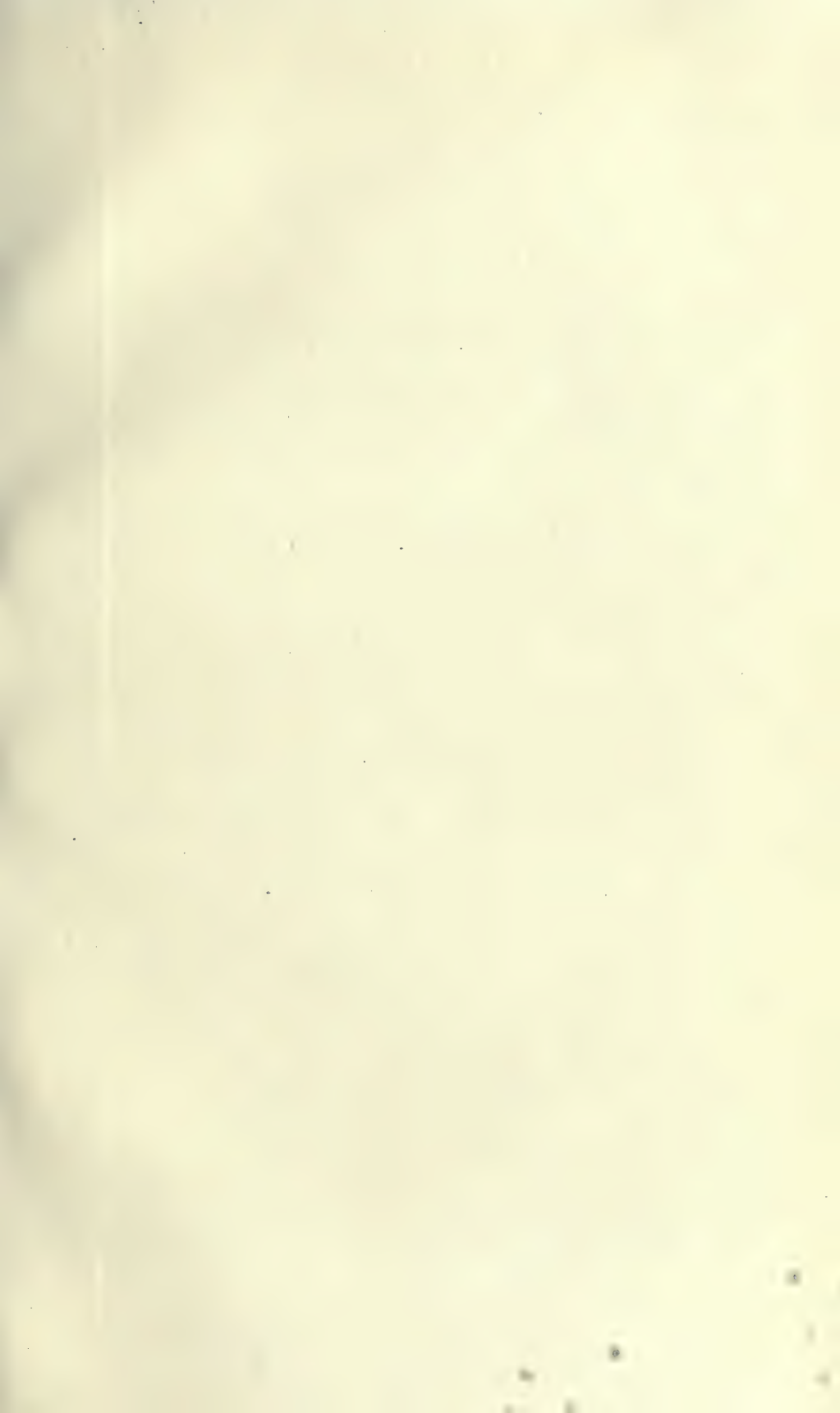
was at full, shining like a lamp that one might read by, showing every object round about, clear and distinct. Strolled on to see the *diligence* arrive about 10 in the evening, which undoubtedly is always an event, seeing it is the only regular means of communication with the outside world. There was a little crowd to watch the *voyageurs* descend. As they scrambled down one by one, we could not help wondering how they had enjoyed the tremendous jolting of the long desert ride. Three French passengers were for our hotel. After the passengers came the luggage, and it was very evident that the great variety and quantity could not appertain to the passengers, who, like ourselves, seemed to have brought into these regions nothing they could do without; undoubtedly the *diligence* combined both the passenger and luggage traffic, and indeed it was surprising to see the amount of merchandise which was tumbled down from the top. Several Arabs were loitering about the front of the hotel on the look-out for engagements on the morrow; I had a long chat and smoke with one of them, a young fellow, who became quite communicative, giving me part of his family history. He appeared very intelligent; he would like to travel, and wanted to see Paris. He told me he had been placed by his father with a carpenter to learn the trade, but didn't like work, and wanted to be at liberty. I fully believed him, for I couldn't conceive of any young Arab settling down to a fixed occupation.

Wednesday, April 29th. Hot morning. Visited the neat, little Roman Catholic Church at the end of the promenade ; no one but ourselves being present, we spent a short time in rest and reflection. We were now at our greatest distance from home, and to-morrow should start on our return journey ; we had experienced a series of incidents and adventures, interesting and exciting, and certainly felt thankful that so far no accident had happened to us. We were glad that we were about to turn our faces towards our northern home, for we could not but feel that it would be a most serious matter if accident or sickness should overtake us in these quarters, so praying for a safe and happy ending of our travels, we left the cool and quiet shelter of the church, and emerged into the dazzling sunlight. The sun being high in the heavens caused the shade of our umbrellas to be very acceptable.

Called in one of the shops, my wife wishing to make some little purchase ; the man told us that in the hot season the soldiers were not allowed to be out of barracks between 10 and 2, and that most people kept indoors.

There is a large new fort being constructed here, which is nearly completed. The French would, if attacked, in any rising of the Arabs, be able within the fort to feel perfectly secure, and successfully resist any advance upon them. The garrison had been

seriously reduced by drafts on account of the war in Tonquin, and many remarks were made as to the policy of the government in having so few soldiers at this station. Not having as yet had any camel riding, we thought we should like to experience the sensation of that mode of travel, so our guide took us down one of the streets, where, in a kind of large court, a number of camels were kept, and soon arrangements were made for mounting. The two camels were brought into the street and made to kneel, when we mounted; as they rose to their feet we had great difficulty in keeping our seats, for it looked as if we should be thrown right over the animals' heads; however, when fairly seated and ready for starting we looked a little more calmly down upon the amused Arab lads from our certainly elevated position, for if we had been thrown off we should have had a fair distance to fall. Off we started at a steady pace, but it seemed to me that without any great exertion the camel could easily get over a great extent of country, and one can readily see how the camel alone is fitted by nature for these regions. The long, uneasy, rolling swing, like a boat in a heavy swell, made our first camel ride not very enjoyable, but as we were out simply for half-an-hour's new experience, my wife struggled along bravely for a time, but was heartily glad when we turned back again homewards. From what I saw of the camels generally, they appeared patient, long-suffering, and willing creatures, but miserably cared for by their





Sidi Okba.

masters. After an early lunch we started for Sidi Okba ; having arranged for a carriage and pair of horses beforehand, we were, immediately after our repast, comfortably seated and rolling away out of the town. Sidi Okba is one of the oldest towns in North Africa, distant from Biskra about 15 miles. Our coachman was a kind of half-breed—Negro and Arab—and, as I found very soon after we started, knew very little of French, which is always a drawback here when one knows nothing of Arabic. We were soon on the wide-spreading plain, steering in a south-easterly direction and, like a ship at sea, driving to our destination in a direct line, troubled by neither mountains nor roads. The sun in a cloudless sky blazed down upon us, the heat piercing through our umbrellas and being only bearable by reason of the clear, dry atmosphere. Not a tree to be seen anywhere. Two or three dark green patches far away to the north-east could be seen, like low islands on the sea ; these were villages surrounded by palm-trees, which form the oases which lie scattered here and there on the fringe of the great desert of Sahara, but which become rarer as you further advance. And now right away before us is clearly seen the large group of palms which encircle Sidi Okba. About half-an-hour before we reached the place, we passed an old Arab who was toiling along weary and almost exhausted ; he spoke to our driver, who managed in his broken French to make us understand that the

poor old man was going to Sidi Okba to see his son who was dying, and that he begged we would take him in the carriage. We willingly beckoned the old man to mount. He appeared deeply grateful. My wife, of course, felt very much for him, and showed him a locket hanging from her watch-chain, which he had evidently noticed and pointed at ; it was a small gold "memoriam," containing photographs of Nellie and Florrie taken when little girls. She opened it for him, and he appeared clearly to understand it was in memory of a loved one passed away. We set him down at the entrance of the town ; he went his way, and like everyone else, he carried his own sorrows, and we were glad we had been able to render some little service to one we should never see again. The palms looked bright and refreshing, but no signs of life whatever, not even a solitary bird, to be seen. We entered through the mud walls, and at once found ourselves in the midst of people thronging the narrow streets—the young Arabs clinging to the walls as we passed, for there was scarcely room for a passer-by—as we hastened on to the centre of the city. We descended, and having engaged an Arab who claimed to be a professional guide, and who spoke French fairly well, we marched down what seemed the market, which was being held in the long, narrow, main street, the little, low shops on either hand occupied by the sellers of the usual kind of produce, and the simple articles of domestic use. Dates in abundance, but



Prayer in the Desert.



Street Scene.

everywhere covered with flies. One poor old Arab, nearly blind, had a basket of dates before him which was one black mass of moving flies, he himself utterly ignoring their presence, and making no attempt whatever to drive them away. We moved among the motley group, followed by a number of rollicking, curious, chaffing, young Arabs. There is amongst these young Arab lads an amount of humour, fun, and at the same time so much audacious coolness and cunning, that a stranger cannot but feel interested in them. One tall young fellow persistently followed us with a string of beads, asking a ridiculous price, for which he eventually condescended to take a franc. The place appeared almost swarming with people in every nook, window, doorway, and corner, and at no other place had we seen so much blindness, disease and squalor, with swarms of flies settling on every kind of eatable exposed for sale. The most striking thing about the place was the wonderful contrast between the death-like stillness and silence as we approached it, and the busy, turbulent life inside.

We were taken to see the Greast Mosque, which is said to be the oldest in Algeria, around which gathers a great amount of historic interest, and which is visited by great numbers of Moslem pilgrims. The shrine or tomb of Sidi Okba may be considered the most notable object in the Mosque. Through the bars of the door could be seen the many tawdry articles or

relics hung round about ; but what to me seemed ridiculously absurd, was a large, common gilt mirror, such as might have been taken from any ordinary European mantelpiece, which was suspended against the wall, along with ostrich eggs, silk stuffs, and other dingy articles. One or two ancient oak doors, of curious and beautiful workmanship, were also shown, upon which were inscribed Arabic inscriptions. We mounted the tower, from the summit of which a fine view of the town was disclosed beneath us ; circular domes, and square, flat house-tops, jumbled together in a confused mass, with the great, flat desert everywhere beyond, fatiguing to the eye as one gazes into the far distance through the hot, sultry, dancing air. The walls of the interior of the tower were literally covered with names, and I, also, could not resist the temptation, but took out my pencil and scribbled my own. We descended, and followed by a crowd of impudent young Arabs, marched down the narrow streets, our guide taking us into a *café*, where we were glad to seek shelter. A number of Arabs were seated round about, and shortly we were joined by a better sort of personage who was secretary to the Sheik, who it appears was not in the town to-day. After exchanging coffee and compliments I left my card with the secretary, and again we sallied out into the street amongst the throng, making way now and again for some long-necked camel swinging noiselessly past us. On either side were the usual box-like, little, open

shops, just large enough to contain the seller of dates, with his vegetables or *café* round about him. We were taken to the French school, where a number of young Arabs were going through the ordinary course of instruction in French. The master seemed a quiet, retiring, intellectual teacher; he expressed himself much pleased with the progress made by his pupils, and showed us several specimens of their writing. This French teacher was very interesting to us; he appeared to be the only European in the town, and it seemed to us he must be making a great sacrifice to stay in such a place. I liked his manner and demeanour very much, for his heart appeared to be in the work. The good these schools are doing wherever they may be planted in Algeria is sure to be felt, sooner or later, amongst the Arab population in towns. The French are undoubtedly alive to the importance of education, for in every town we found a system of school organization, but which, somehow, did not seem to fit in with the ideas of this stolid, roving, unsettled race, who appeared to look askance at this new influence and knowledge, which might perhaps interfere and upset their cherished customs and manner of life. This little assemblage of Arab children acquiring European knowledge, seemed to us the only bright spot in all Sidi Okba. The time was passing, and now we hastened to our carriage in the market-place, where we found our negro driver ready for starting, and were soon trundling along the narrow streets,

followed by the Arab lads. However, we soon reach the outskirts, and through the palm-trees, we were at once in the desert, steering direct for Biskra. On our homeward journey we passed on our right a very interesting cavalcade, which we took to be an Arab chief with all his household. There were two horsemen in advance, followed by a company of camels and horses, some carrying baggage ; two of the camels carried each a kind of covered tent or awning, in which we saw several females, comfortably lounging, being thus protected from the fierce rays of the sun. The men were all gaily apparelled, and the various coloured garments and trappings gave the caravan a rather brilliant appearance. As we passed they were evidently going to rest there for a time, as several of them were dismounting. A little further on we saw away to our left a smart carriage with an awning and a pair of fine horses, coming from the direction of Biskra, in which was seated a fine, dark-looking Arab, who, said our coachman, was the Sheik of Sidi Okba. We noticed that he stopped and seemed to have a long talk with the company we had just passed. But we hasten on, as fast as the dry, uneven, sandy ground will allow. As for roads, there are none ; we see an object in the distance, and make straight for it. By-and-bye we approach again the palms, and life—for the palm-tree is the principal sign of life and habitation in the desert, and soon are once more at what we now gladly look upon as our comfortable home, the Hotel



Caravan in the Sahara.

du Sahara. After dinner we began to prepare for our early morning journey homeward. We had intended leaving on the Tuesday or Wednesday, but found, on application at the *diligence* office, that all the places were taken for two days forward, so we at once secured for Thursday morning the three places in the *coupé*, thus having it entirely to ourselves.

Having settled the bill and made the necessary preparations, we retired to rest, requesting the Arab waiter to call us about one o'clock, as the *diligence* started at two in the morning, but owing to the noise and chatter of a young married couple in an adjoining room, and also from the fear of over-sleeping, we did not sleep a wink, and well it was we didn't, for the rascally Arab never came near.

Thursday, April 30th. We rose soon after one o'clock, and hurriedly dressing, marched out of our bedroom with our baggage, but not a soul was about, and there being no time to lose, we started at once for the *diligence*, and getting comfortably seated in the snug *coupé*, with all our belongings, quietly waited for the move. In a few minutes after, Dr. Parr and his wife came and took their places in the *banquette* above us. The moon had not risen; the morning was dark and bitterly cold, and thankful were we that we had been fortunate enough to secure the *coupé*, which, being quite closed in, was a snug cabin and shelter

from the chill morning air. All being ready, crack went the whip, and soon the white houses and dark palms were left far behind. We sped along the hard, uneasy track at a pace more rapid than comfortable, soon arriving at the Col de Sfa, which we slowly mounted, and again crossing the now shallow ford, were in the grey of the morning fairly on the broad, interminable, trackless plain, steering direct for El Kantara, arriving about noon, where we changed horses and had comfortable lunch. Coming now to the good French roads the rest of the journey becomes easy and enjoyable. As we drive along we are struck with the white appearance of the ground in many places, caused by the salt clearly seen on the surface of the soil. We stop at several places to change horses, and as the evening draws on we approach Batna, passing on our left the immense range of cedar forests, the giant cedars on the far-stretching summit standing boldly and distinctly against the sky-line. Batna is seen in the distance. The long, flourishing whip is again cracking over the heads of the horses, and we enter the town at a gallant pace, descending at our old hotel, which we gladly welcome as our first night's resting-place on our homeward journey.

The evening was chilly and cold, the wood fires being much enjoyed. My aneroid stood at 2490, giving about 3500 feet of elevation, which would account for the difference of temperature. Our friends



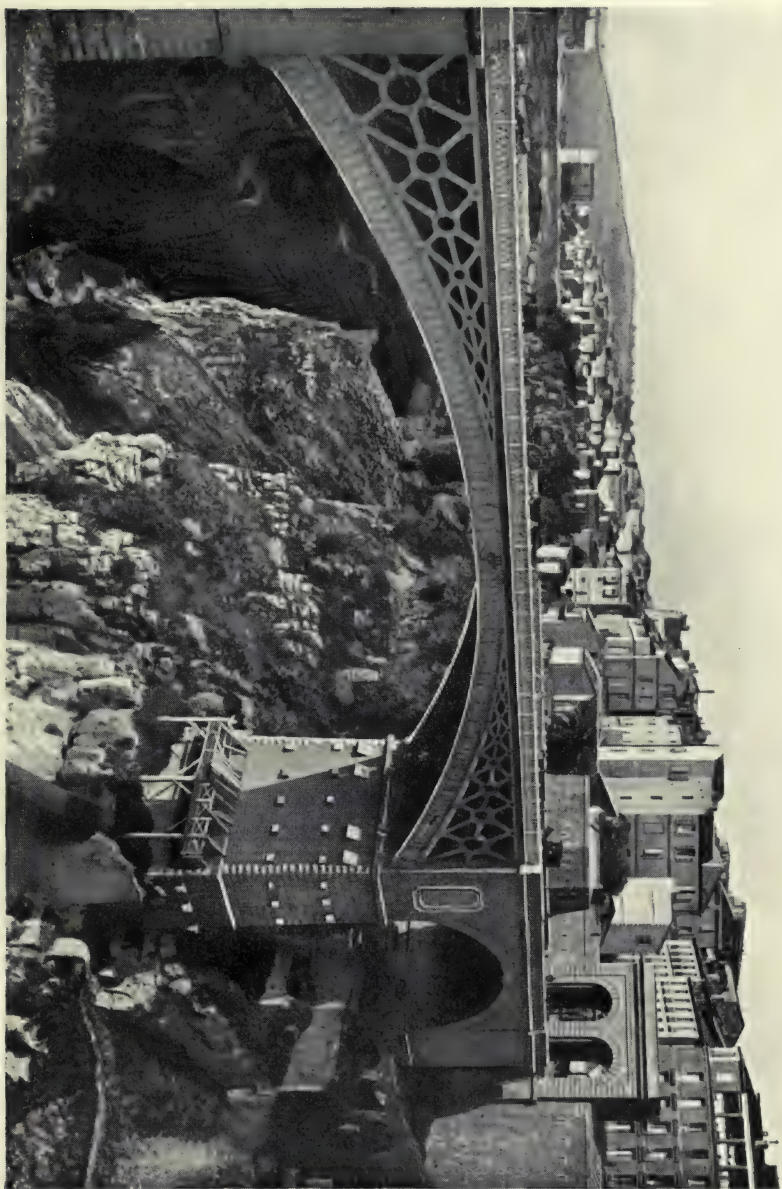
Encampment of Arabs.

Dr. and Mrs. P. in the *banquette* had had a terrible shaking, and must have felt keenly the bitterly cold ride of the early morning, as they immediately on arrival had a big log fire in their bedroom. At dinner there appeared the same military company we had met before. My wife was glad to retire to bed immediately after. I had some talk with a French gentleman on the balcony who had been down as far as Tourgout, and who gave an interesting account of the habits and customs of the people there. I strolled into the church, where, evidently, a popular service was being held, the place being quite full. The priest, in strong and energetic language, was preaching to an apparently attentive audience. There was a fair array of choristers, formed of the young men and girls of the town, who all seemed to enter heartily into the service. I returned to the hotel, and immediately to bed, the luxury of which can only be appreciated by one who has had the fourteen hours' *diligence* jolting between Biskra and Batna.

Friday, May 1st. The train for Constantine leaving at 5-49 in the morning, we were up early, and partaking of a cup of coffee before starting, were soon stowed in the hotel omnibus amongst a number more, arriving, as is generally the case with all hotel omnibuses, with plenty of time to spare. Leaving Batna the country is uninteresting until we approach Constantine. I was interested and much amused in

conning over a little work, handed to me by Dr. P., who, with his wife, was in the same compartment with us, styled *A Trip to the Great Sahara by a Cockney*, giving a most laughable, yet a very clear and correct description of the Arabs ; depicting geographically the country, with the habits and appearance of the people between Philippeville and Biskra.

The train stopped a short time at El Guerrah, the junction for Setif ; then continuing our journey we arrived at Constantine about noon, having had a pleasant and agreeable ride, in wonderful contrast with the formidable *diligence* journey of the day before. The clear, dry, pure, invigorating air, although warm, seemed to sustain and give elasticity to one's spirits. Whilst our baggage was being put on the hotel 'bus there was time to look around. The modern railway station, with its active bustle and busy life, and just in front of us one of the oldest existing cities of the world, perched on a rock, almost entirely surrounded by a deep and immense ravine ; the houses crowded all round on every available foot of rock, overlooking and almost threatening to tumble into the depths below. As we drive over the fine, modern bridge which spans the deep ravine, we see the swift waters of the Rummel coursing along the rocky bed far away below us, and at once we enter by the Rue Nationale, a modern French street, cutting straight through the very midst of the closely-packed



Constantine : Le Grand Pont.

dwellings of the Arab quarter. This is a fine, modern thoroughfare, in striking contrast with the thick mass of wonderfully-strange Arab structures through which it has been carved, like cutting through a cheese. We arrive at the Hotel d'Orient, at the upper end of the Rue Nationale, where we found comfortable quarters, this, and the Hotel de Paris opposite, being the two best hotels in Constantine. Whilst sat at lunch an Arab funeral passed along the street. We were first attracted by the peculiar uproar in the street, as of a distant crowd shouting and wailing, and as the noise increased, we ran to the window and saw a long, rambling procession of Arabs, followed by a bier carried by a number of men. The procession was headed by about twelve to fifteen public mourners, who appeared to occupy very much the same position to the funeral as would a band of music to soldiers on the march, but instead of inspiriting tunes, these hired mourners were weeping, wailing, half-singing, half-shouting, with occasional intervals of rest ; the whole company moving along without any attempt at order or arrangement, talking and making comments as they passed by. We afterwards drove to the Arab cemetery, where we saw the group of public mourners standing at some distance from the grave, seemingly in familiar conversation, and not appearing much distressed by the hasty and unceremonious interment taking place before them. We hesitated to approach too near the grave, but were beckoned forward by several of the

Arabs. The body seemed wrapped in linen cloths, but not enclosed in any coffin, and great care seemed to be taken that it should not be exposed whilst being lowered into the grave. This cemetery, like most Arab cemeteries, was sandy, bare, and unenclosed, covered with mounds of stones, giving the appearance of untidiness and neglect: and yet the Arabs most indignantly repel any desecration of these burial-places. As we walk about this strange city one is impressed by its evident antiquity. Humanity has multiplied and packed together like bees, century after century, on this rocky fort, surrounded by the natural safeguard of the immense ravine of the Rummel below.

The naturally-isolated and commanding position of this wonderful rock has made it from the earliest ages downwards a place to be fought for by every invader and conqueror of the country, and has always been the scene of continuous war and blood-shedding.

There being only a certain amount of space on this rock, every available yard appears at one time to have been occupied, the houses on the ravine almost overhanging the gulf below. It was rather strange to see, as we crossed the bridge, several long-legged storks, evidently without fear of disturbance, standing on the house-tops along the ravine. After leaving the Arab cemetery we descended towards the Rummel,



Gorges du Rhummel.





General View of Constantine.

having on our right the high, rocky cliffs which are part of the great rampart surrounding the city. The city itself reminds one strongly of the stack rocks on the South Wales coast, only accessible to the seagulls, which have entire possession, and seem to be perched on every available inch of space affording standing room. The dwellers on this old rock-city have fought and struggled very much after the fashion of the seagulls, for down from the earliest ages, from this crowded plateau, generation after generation has pushed its predecessor over the battlements of time into the gulf beyond.

In many places are remains of Roman architecture, with inscriptions ; and as we descend into the ravine, the effect of the rushing water on the rocks through long-past ages is plainly seen in the deep-worn river-bed of this old rock city, the whole surroundings of which form a deeply-interesting geological study.

Saturday, May 2nd. We passed the day in visiting the many places of interest in the city. The modern palace of Hadj-Ahmed possesses great interest, being to a great extent built and ornamented by forced exactions from the rich neighbours of the city and country, and having been completed only a short time before the city was taken by the French. The mosques and other public buildings stand closely

packed amongst the densely-crowded houses, with narrow and tortuous streets, with strange buildings at every turn, in striking contrast with the fine, straight, modern streets of French construction which here and there with military exactitude have been carved right through the jumbled mass of ancient structures.

There are numerous tanneries, the working of leather in its various branches being here an important trade ; we were attracted in passing through the leather market by a number of men marching round in a circle, carrying skins of bright colours for sale. We were much interested in the Jewish quarter. The Jews appear to hold a respectable position in the city. Passing along, we were attracted by the picturesque view of a court and fountain through the large open doorway of one of the more respectable of the Jewish houses. Stopping to admire the scene, a fine-looking boy standing by invited us to enter, and as we were walking round admiring the building, a fine, middle-aged gentleman, in robes principally of blue velvet, entered the courtyard, and seeing us with the boy, stood, and for a moment seemed to regard us as intruders. The boy told him that he had invited us to enter ; this at once made things all right, and he pressed us to enter and look through the rooms. He had a noble, dignified appearance, easy and courteous : altogether a fine type of a Jewish gentleman. There were three or four galleries round the large, open

court, from which one or two gaily-robed females looked calmly down upon us. The house appeared well furnished in the Eastern style ; low couches, and beds on the floors. The dining room had a low table, raised about a foot from the ground ; the repast had not been long finished, as the table was not yet cleared. All round the table were low couches or large cushions. In the library we were shown several ancient scrolls and manuscripts. The master conducted us through the various rooms and galleries. The rooms seemed mostly to be divided from each other simply by trellis-work and curtains, with a good deal of drapery. Altogether, the large court open to the sky gave a light and airy appearance, contrasting strongly with the close, firmly-built structure as seen from the street outside. We were much pleased with the kindly courtesy and willing readiness of this Jewish gentleman in giving us an opportunity of looking over what was evidently one of the higher-class houses of the Constantine Jews. Continuing our walk through the Jews' quarter we came to the higher part of the city along the *kasba* or citadel, in which are quartered a large number of soldiers. As in every other important place, the French hold firm military possession throughout all Algeria. Passing on through the close, tortuous streets we enter a kind of long bazaar in a straggling cloister-like building, and pass a building where a military concert was being given. Everywhere there is a strange mixture

of the European and Arab element, but there seems no attempt whatever on the part of the Arabs to adapt themselves to the habits and customs of the Europeans. Altogether, Constantine is a strange and wonderful old-world city ; a striking jumble of all the nationalities bordering on the Mediterranean. The Jews and Arabs of the more respectable and higher class appeared to be here in much larger proportion than in any other place we had visited in Algeria. The central and commanding position of Constantine seems to mark it as a place that will be always important as civilization and commerce push onward along the North African coast, from the Mediterranean towards the great desert of Sahara.

Sunday, May 3rd. The steamer for Marseilles leaving at noon to-day, we left the hotel early for the train which left for Philippeville at 6-30 a.m. For some time after leaving Constantine we were passing through a winding, hilly country, with pleasant and extensive views, and arrived at Philippeville about 10-0. Philippeville is a large and important port, upon which a large amount of money has been expended, and being the nearest port to Constantine, seems closely connected with that city, and with the district of Batna and Biskra and the desert beyond.

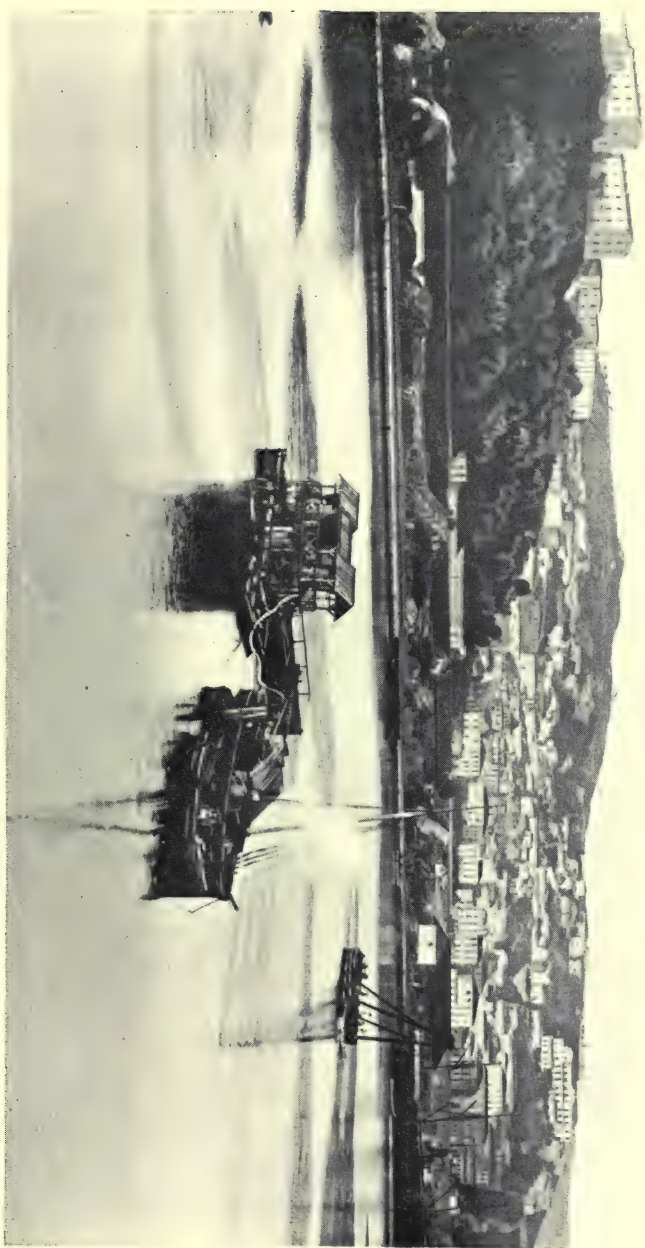
Having sent on our big trunk to Philippeville when we left the steamer at Bougie, intending to pick it up



Constantine and the Gorge.

on our return from Biskra, we had now to hunt it up, and it was only after a long and most annoying search that we chanced to get it. The man in charge of left luggage had gone to dinner, and, as it could not be found amongst the other ordinary left luggage, there was every appearance of its being lost. The men were exceedingly kind, and willing to do anything to find it. At last one of them suggested they should look in the official's office, and certainly there it was, clearly seen through the window, but as he had taken the key with him we could not get at it. However, as we could not wait, for the steamer was leaving directly, they broke open the door, and giving the trunk in charge of a porter, I rejoined Marie who had been waiting for me nearly an hour with the rest of the baggage at the far end of the port. It would have been much better had we at once got on the steamer, but having only had a cup of coffee in the early morning, we stepped into the hotel close by to have a little lunch, then soon after took a boat from the quay to the steamer, which was some little distance before us. Having had a good deal of chaffering with an impudent young fellow who wanted a ridiculous sum for looking after our luggage, I had overlooked the fact that it was close upon noon, the steamer's time of departure, and as our boatman was pulling away towards the vessel, to my horror I saw the steamer was actually moving, and evidently we were going to be left behind, and if we had not shown

determination, we should certainly have been left. The steamer was leaving us, but the boatman pulled for his life, and I shouted at the top of my voice. In a minute or two the captain slackened speed, and with hard rowing I at last managed to grasp the rope of the ladder at the steamer's side, and we were dragged along until we and the baggage were safely on board. I gratefully dropped a liberal fare into the boatman's hand ; the rope was let go, and in two minutes, far away behind, he was seen slowly paddling towards the quay. I had a few sharp words with the captain. I said he had started before the time ; he said it was our business to be on board an hour before starting. However, we were shown to a comfortable, cosy cabin to ourselves, and after a short rest and reflection on this last exciting adventure, I went on deck. The fine steamer had cleared the harbour, and at full speed was steaming ahead. Philippeville had a picturesque appearance from the sea. Soon we were in the open sea, steering direct for Marseilles. A sense of quietness and relief comes over one—no hurry, excitement, or worry, but rest and peace. We passed the afternoon mostly on deck, the sea being calm, with a delightful breeze. We had not a large number of passengers. A French lady who had travelled with us from Constantine with two or three of her children, seemed to attract our attention, and a French gentleman who was quite enthusiastic upon the subject of a great scheme for levelling up the valley on the south-western



Philadelphia.

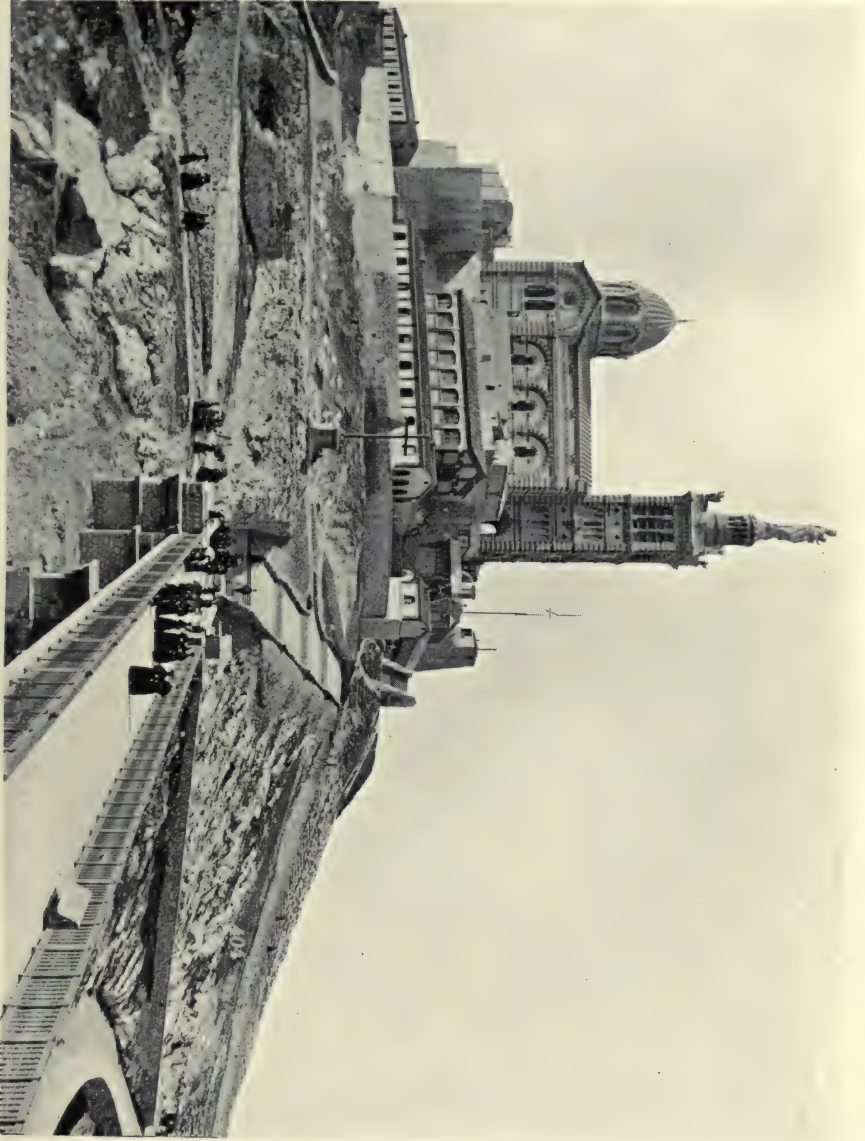
side of Constantine with the hill opposite, thus forming a vast plateau upon which another city might be built ; a project often talked about, but one which was not favourably looked upon by all. An English company had offered to carry this out on condition the city would give them the land for building, but the offer was refused. This gentleman said the municipality were now more favourably inclined, and would grant a concession on certain conditions, and he was going to France to try to form a company. He was ventilating his scheme to all who would listen, and most of the passengers had the benefit of his explanations.

A ship on the ocean is a world in itself, and trivial things become important. The evening draws on, and after dinner and another stroll, we retire to our snug cabin, lulled to rest and sleep by the swish of the water and the dull grinding of the distant screw.

Monday, May 4th. The morning sun shone brightly on our gallant vessel as she steadily brought us nearer to our still distant port. The day being fine and clear, with a calm sea, it became an enjoyable exercise to promenade and look over the fine and well-appointed steamer ; but the great sight was ever the mighty circle of water, in the centre of which we seemed always fixed. As we were due to arrive at 6 p.m. we were on the look-out in the afternoon for signs of land. A solitary sea-bird now and again,

and occasionally a vessel bound for the same port, were sighted, as we neared Marseilles. By-and-bye land became visible, and soon we were passing the islands which are prominent and striking as we approach the port—Chateau d'If amongst the rest, made famous by the glamour of romantic and historic interest which hangs about it. And now we are in full view of Marseilles. High above the city stands the Church of Notre Dame de la Garde, a most prominent and striking object, standing boldly out against the sky-line, backed by the vast amphitheatre of hills which seem to encircle Marseilles, and, stretching right and left in bold, rugged promontories, form a wonderful and striking coast-line as seen from the deck of the steamer. The approach to Marseilles from the sea is undoubtedly one of the great sights of the world, and forms a beautiful picture, as it hangs in the gallery of life's memory, to be looked upon in after years with pleasure, or, it may be, with a tinge of sadness, as a reminiscence of one of the sunny spots in bygone days.

We enter port soon after six o'clock. The captain, being complimented on the rapid and enjoyable passage, volunteered a remark that, had it not been for the delay in leaving Philippeville he would have given the passengers the chance of catching the six o'clock night express to Paris. I of course accepted this as a gentle hint to ourselves, as having had to run



Marseille : Notre Dame de la Garde.

after the steamer, for which I blame the big Noah's Ark belonging to my wife.

We were some time before we could pass the Custom House with our luggage, and were very much pestered by an Englishman who appeared determined to have both our luggage and ourselves. At last we got safely located at the Hotel Noailles.

Tuesday, May 5th. The morning being fine we strolled out along the Cannebière and one or two of the principal streets. Afterwards visited the Church Notre Dame de la Garde, from the summit of which is a magnificent view of the city below, with the surrounding hills and the distant islands. The docks and shipping, stretching for a great distance beyond the city, had all the signs of a busy and important port.

Along the Corniche is one of the finest drives in the Mediterranean. This magnificent carriage-road follows the windings of the rocky coast, close to the sea, in and out along the many inlets for many miles, but quite level the entire length. This was a most enjoyable drive, having the sea and the islands before us all the way. We returned along the Prado, a magnificent promenade and avenue, all this part being beautifully laid out for the public benefit; along with the Corniche road it is by a long way the finest

promenade and drive in Marseilles, and gives a great additional interest and importance to the town.

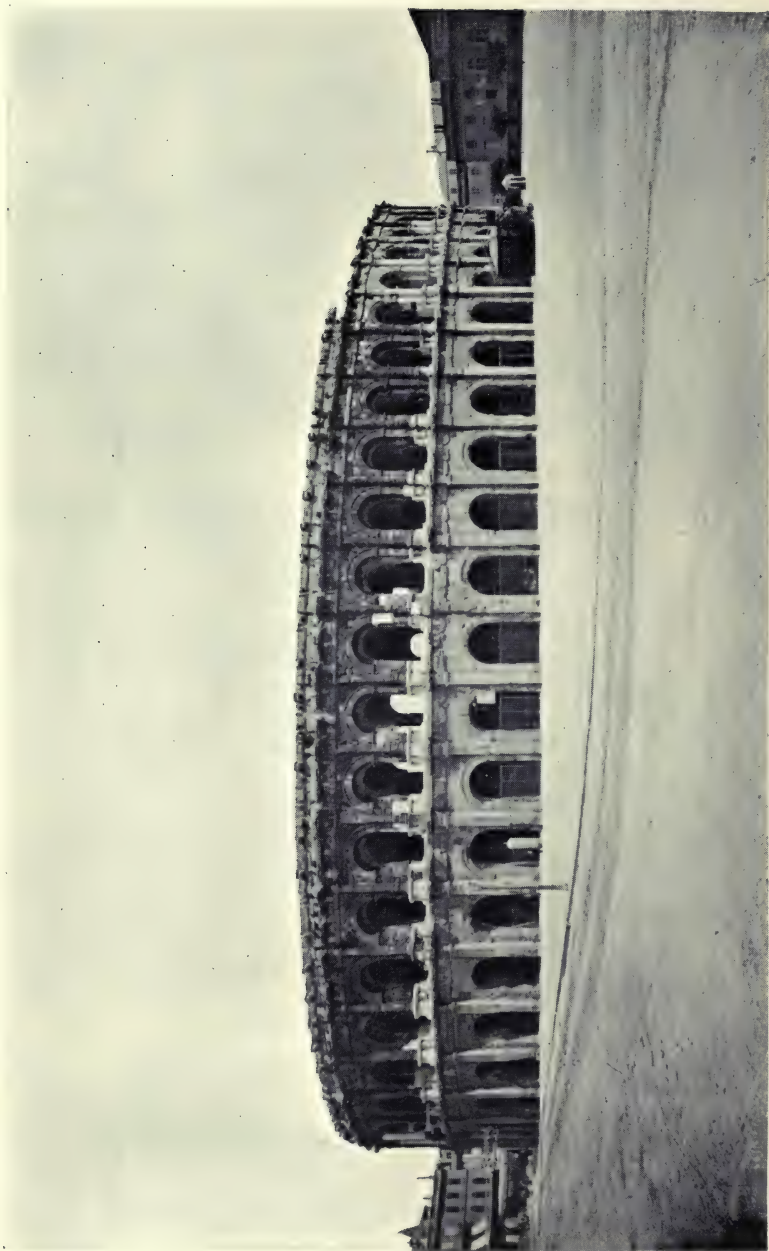
Saw the Palais de Longchamp containing the Museum and Picture Gallery. These buildings, with the Triumphal Arch, the Château d'Eau, the massive flight of steps, with the great volume of water forming the cascade, have altogether a striking and massive appearance.

We left in the evening about six for Nîmes, where we intend passing a day or two to see the Roman antiquities, particularly the Pont du Gard, which I had longed to see from a boy. The country is extremely interesting as we leave Marseilles. As we approach Arles, we pass right through the great plain of La Crau, a vast, level tract of country, stretching away on either side as far as one could see, and covered with small stones. Although this plain has the appearance of absolute sterility, there are yet large flocks of sheep to be seen, which find pasturage in a rich, succulent herbage under the stones, which are turned over by the sheep as they feed. Passing Arles in the evening twilight, we arrive at Tarascon about eight or soon after. This being a junction for Nîmes we change carriages. There is here a good buffet; the station being from its position an important junction, has become a very interesting and busy centre. Shortly we take the train forward to Nîmes



Marseille : Musée des Beaux Arts.





Nîmes : The Arena.

where we arrive about ten, and soon find ourselves comfortably located at the Hotel du Luxembourg. We had had a pleasant and interesting journey from Marseilles, but were glad to retire to rest, with a certain amount of satisfaction with the progress made on our homeward journey.

Wednesday, May 6th. Nîmes has all the appearance of a large, important town—modern buildings, wide boulevards, open spaces—but to travellers, the great interest lies in its famous Roman remains. Passing from our hotel along the fine Esplanade, we walk in front of the Palais de Justice, and suddenly turning the corner, at once come in full view of the magnificent ruins of the great Amphitheatre, standing in solitary grandeur in the centre of the great square, surrounded by modern buildings, forming a strange and striking contrast, and with which there seemed nothing whatever in common

To any stranger, coming suddenly upon this wonderful and gigantic ruin, the effect must certainly be startling. All the buildings around stand well back, so that every part of this deeply-interesting architectural structure can be well studied, and seen to advantage. The Nîmes people, it would appear, are immensely proud of their Roman heritage, as they seem to have made all other buildings give way to the keeping open of these much-prized ruins. The ex-

terior is in a much better state of preservation than any of the other Roman amphitheatres in Europe, but the interior has been to a great extent broken up and carried away. The immense blocks of stone forming the long range of seats, rising tier upon tier from basement to the very summit, would be a great temptation to the vandals of succeeding ages, who have simply used this gigantic building, like other great Roman works, as a huge quarry, opened and ready to their hand. It is said to have accommodated 24,000 spectators. Some attempt at restoration has been made, one or two of the arches being restored to their original state, which makes the study of this huge pile deeply interesting, and shews clearly the beauty and magnificence of its ancient architecture. The great square was gay and busy; numbers of country people, with their highly-coloured market carts, were scattered about, amongst which passed to and fro a lively crowd, utterly oblivious of the mighty Roman relic overshadowing them all.

The taste for the bloody and exciting games of the Roman period still lingers amongst these southern people, as there are often bull-fights in the Arena which seem to have the full sanction of the municipal authorities.

Passing along, we arrive at the old Roman baths, Place de la Fontaine. This is a very pretty quarter



Nîmes : Interior of the Arena.





Nîmes : Temple of Diana.

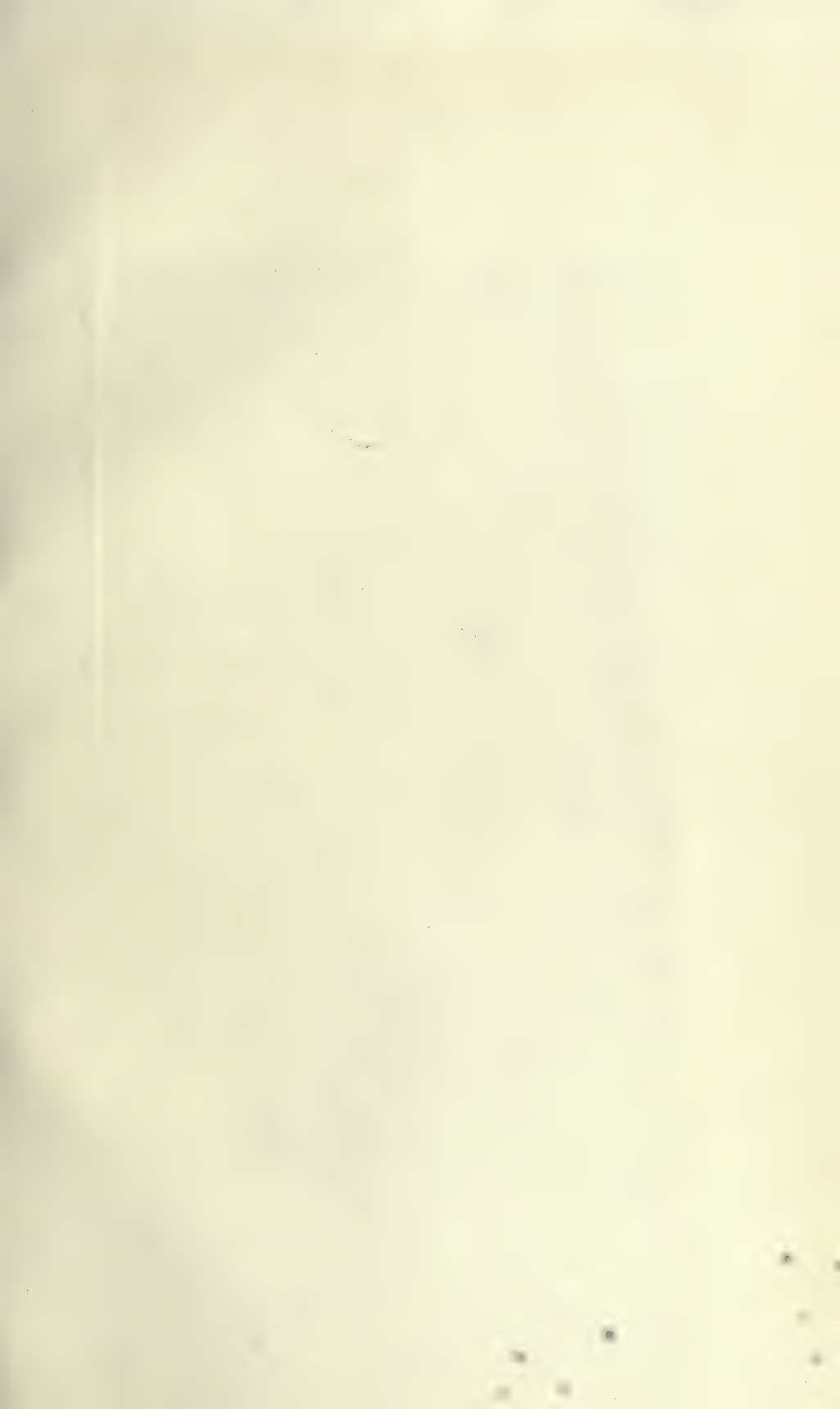
of the town ; the baths appear to have been considerably restored, and are said to give a fair idea of what they would be like in the times of the Romans. Close by stand some interesting ruins called Temple of Diana, part of which is in fair preservation, serving as a kind of museum for sculpture and antiquities found about in the neighbourhood. These ruins give evidence of fine buildings, which seem to have been at one time in connection with the adjoining baths. All the grounds in this quarter are tastefully laid out in pleasure gardens and promenades. On the rising ground behind rises a strange old Roman tower called the Tour Magne, about a hundred feet high ; we mounted the staircase to the top, from which there is a fine view of the surrounding country.

After lunch we engage a carriage to the Pont du Gard, about fourteen miles distance. We had a pleasant drive through a level country. Stopping for a cup of coffee at one of the little way-side *cabarets*, I had some interesting talk with the woman about the state of the vines. She told me the entire district was, in fact, ruined by the ravages of the Phylloxera, the suffering and distress being very great. The only means of combatting this terrible plague seemed to be by introducing American vines, which this destructive insect could not attack. But the entire rooting-out of the old vines was a serious matter, as four or five years must elapse before the new vines were really

of value, and great numbers of little *cultivateurs* had lost all, and numbers were obliged to leave the country. We passed several villages ; here, as elsewhere, the entire surface of the land seemed to be exclusively reserved for the growth of one thing or another, as a building or house of any kind was rarely seen ; the people crowding together in their little villages, going out in the early morning to their distant fields, and returning late in the evening.

In all these villages almost every head of a family is a small landed proprietor, all the work being done by himself and family. Nothing but the great fact of the land being his own would reconcile the French farmer to his hard, monotonous life ; but the wonderful thrift, combined with economic cooking and careful management in these French country households, seems to bring a success and contentment which, with the same amount of land, would be utterly wanting in an ordinary English farmer's family. We pass along through long stretches of wasted vineyards, enlivened largely by the olive-tree, which is extensively cultivated here.

Arriving at our destination we see right before us, crossing the river Gard, the wonderful aqueduct of the Romans, the Pont du Gard. It is indeed a striking object, with its three tiers of arches, one above the other. There was luxuriant vegetation all around,





Pont du Gard.

and contrasting with the level country through which we had passed, the scenery, with the distant lovely views, formed a charming landscape. As we looked up and gazed at the long row of arches standing upon the larger arches below, and these again supported by those spanning the river, we were much impressed with the singular beauty of this famed Roman structure. At the top it is close upon 900 feet in length, and about 180 feet high from the river below. There are 35 arches in the top row, upon which runs the conduit or channel for the water, covered by large slabs of stone; this channel, four or five feet high, and perhaps four feet wide, still retains the thick covering of cement with which it was lined. I crept easily along this old Roman watercourse for some distance, and then walked on the top, from which is a magnificent view of the surrounding country. The 35 arches stand on eleven much larger arches, and these again on six, spanning the river Gard which runs along the valley, the hills rising on either side. The light colour of the stone, not darkened by the storms of nineteen centuries, the long top range of arches with the two tiers of deep arches below, and the background of dark green foliage on the hill-side beyond, altogether seemed at first to give a light airy appearance, but the massiveness and stern solidity of the structure soon grew upon one when the eye tried to take it all in, and particularly on realising the immense blocks of stone forming the piers and arches,

all flat-bedded and closely jointed, without cement or mortar, every part showing signs of the most careful workmanship and finish.

This great bridge across the Gard, although the principal and most imposing feature, is still only a small portion of the gigantic Roman aqueduct, extending twenty-five or twenty-six miles to the springs which supplied ancient Nîmes with water, and traces of it, more or less, still exist the entire length. Lately, during a drougthy season, the advisability of restoring this great Roman work was seriously discussed by the authorities, but the opposition and influence of the existing water companies was so great that this great patriotic scheme was quashed, although it was stated the cost would have been neither unreasonable nor excessive. It is interesting to note what Arthur Young says of this aqueduct in his journal when he visited this place a hundred years ago :

“ July 28th, 1787. Early in the morning to the
 “ Pont du Gard through a plain covered with vast
 “ plantations of olives to the left, but much waste
 “ rocky land. At the first view of that celebrated
 “ aqueduct I was rather disappointed, having ex-
 “ pected something of greater magnitude ; but soon
 “ found the error : I was, on examining it more
 “ nearly, convinced that it possessed every quality
 “ that ought to make a strong impression. It is a

“stupendous work ; the magnitude and the massive
“solidity of the architecture, which may possibly
“endure two or three thousand years more, united
“with the undoubted utility of the undertaking, to
“give us a high idea of the spirit of exertion which
“executed it for the supply of a provincial town ;
“the surprise however may cease when we consider
“the nations enslaved that were the workmen.”

On the eastern side, at the level of, and corresponding with, the bottom tier of arches, a bridge was built in the reign of Louis XIV. This modern roadway, constructed to connect the two banks of the river, is built in and against the lower portion of the aqueduct, and was intended to be of much the same character and style of architecture. Marie and I lingered for some time round about the arches by the water's edge, the river being low but very clear, examining the long lines of the closely-jointed stones which in immense blocks formed the lower arches.

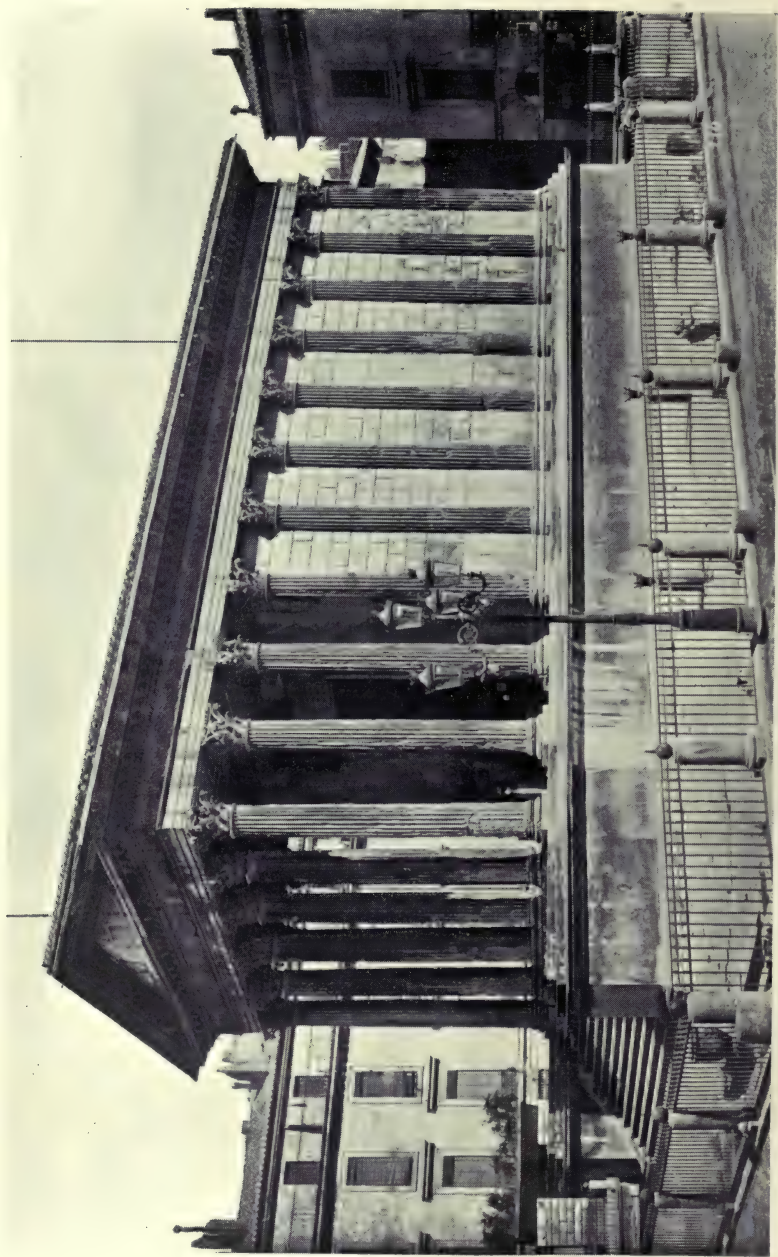
It stands alone, there being no other object near to attract attention, and as one gazes up at the towering arches, glimmering in the evening sun, the silence of two thousand years seems to make itself felt. One thinks of those Roman builders, and of the close supervision and care which undoubtedly must have been given to have the exactness and finish which is a marked feature in all these Roman works.

After a slight refreshment at the restaurant amongst the trees close by, we bid good-bye to the Pont du Gard, which for so many years I had longed to see. It had "come to pass." I had gazed and wondered like others in the centuries gone by, and now, I also must "pass on." With a tinge of sadness we drove silently and thoughtfully through the dark olives and wasted vineyards, home.

In the evening, after dinner, we strolled on to the service at the French Wesleyan Church, in connection with the school for young ladies which was formed here many years ago. Mr. Prunier, the pastor, invited us to his house adjoining, after the service, where we saw Lydia Cook. She had known Florrie in Lausanne, so that we had enquiries to make, and news to give of our friends and families. This school, with its church, standing in the very best part of Nîmes, seems a large and important establishment, and being close by the Roman baths and the extensive promenade, is pleasantly situated.

Thursday, May 7th. The Hotel du Luxembourg stands in a fine position on the Esplanade, an immense open space, in the centre of which is a magnificent fountain, the many trees forming the various avenues making altogether a most enjoyable promenade. After breakfast we visited the Maison-Carrée. I should consider this one of the most inter-





Nîmes : Maison Carrée.

esting of Roman remains now existing in Europe. Having been taken as a model by the first Napoleon in the building of the Madeleine, this old temple has become well-known throughout the world. Being built nearly two thousand years ago, in the early years of the Christian era, it yet stands the most complete and best preserved of any of the wonderful architectural works of Roman art which now exist in any part of Europe.

Surrounded by tall, fluted Corinthian columns with richly-cut capitals, surmounted by an exquisitely-carved entablature running round the entire building, and the magnificent colonnaded portico reached by a flight of fifteen or sixteen steps, altogether gave a sense of beauty and completeness of proportion which was simply striking. Like the Pont du Gard, the longer it was gazed upon and studied, the more interesting it became. There being no windows, it was, like most Roman buildings of this kind, lighted from the top, giving an equally diffused light in every part of the interior. It is now used as a museum of ancient sculpture and antiquities, many of them, like those in the museum at Naples, being peculiarly characteristic of the age to which they belong.

It is interesting to see how much these Roman remains are prized and cared for. There is a grandeur and beauty, with harmony and exquisite proportion

so strikingly manifested, that there need be no wonder these valuable works should be copied, and accepted by succeeding generations as the highest models and perfection of architectural genius.

After our interesting study of the *Maison Carrée*, we rambled through the town, comparing the fine, wide boulevards with the narrow, cramped, zigzag streets of the old part. Nîmes has the appearance of a comparatively new town, which is made even more striking by these well-preserved and fine old Roman edifices, showing at once that one is treading the stones of an ancient city. A great and striking change seems to have come over most of the large cities on the continent during the past thirty or forty years. The rage for re-building commencing in Paris under the second Empire would seem to have seized the other large towns of the country, everywhere the magnificent right-angled streets, and the long, wide boulevards pushing the old parts out of sight.

Having to leave in the evening, we now return to our hotel, and prepare for the journey to Paris.

Leaving Nîmes between six and seven we arrive at Tarascon before eight, and wait the night express from Marseilles which leaves there about six. Owing to some accident to the engine the train was delayed over an hour. Having taken our seats in a comfortable

through carriage which was to be coupled to the express, we sat quietly and patiently waiting, dreamily passing the time. The sun had long set, and the shadows of the long drawn out evening now rapidly closed around us. It would be nearly ten when the express came up, but after the usual bustle and change of passengers and baggage incident to this busy junction, our carriage in the meantime having been attached to the train, we were soon bounding along at a rapid speed on our journey north. Station after station was left behind, all of them in the night having a solitary, weird appearance. A short stoppage at Lyons, and on again into the darkness, the monotonous grinding and rattle of the rushing train forming a strange kind of lullaby which seemed to draw one on to intervals of sleep.

Friday, May 8th. We arrive in Paris, Lyons station, about eleven on Friday morning, over an hour late. After about half-an-hour's delay in passing baggage, we were soon comfortably located in our old quarters, the Hotel du Louvre. Mr. and Mrs. H., who had returned from Algiers some time ago, met us in Paris, and passed the night with us at the hotel. Mr. H. and I had a stroll on the boulevards in the evening.

Saturday, May 9th. Madame Nillson was engaged to sing at a great farewell concert this after-

noon at the Trocadero ; had we been alone we should have heard this favourite singer, but as our friends were leaving in the afternoon, it seemed more convenient for us to see the 'Salon.' There was a fine collection of paintings. As compared with our Academy, I should think the French paintings striking, sensational, and peculiarly French in taste and subjects, and in my opinion not equal in character and high tone to our own in London. Our friends having left in the afternoon, we passed the evening quietly at the hotel. Marie seemed to have caught cold from walking on the wet sand which covered the floor at the Exhibition. The courtyard of this hotel is made very enjoyable by the arrangement of a magnificent flight of steps in two wings, leading to balconies opening into the long crimson reading-room. It becomes very interesting to watch from these balconies the arrivals and departures.

Sunday, May 10th. Called in at the Madeleine at the morning service. The interior of this building is, of itself, a magnificently beautiful picture, and like its ancient prototype at Nimes, being entirely lighted from the top, has a wonderfully clear and fine effect, every part of the building being equally lighted, and every object round about and on the walls distinctly seen, there being no windows anywhere to distract the eye. Anyone charmed with the singular beauty of the Madeleine should see the Maison Carrée at

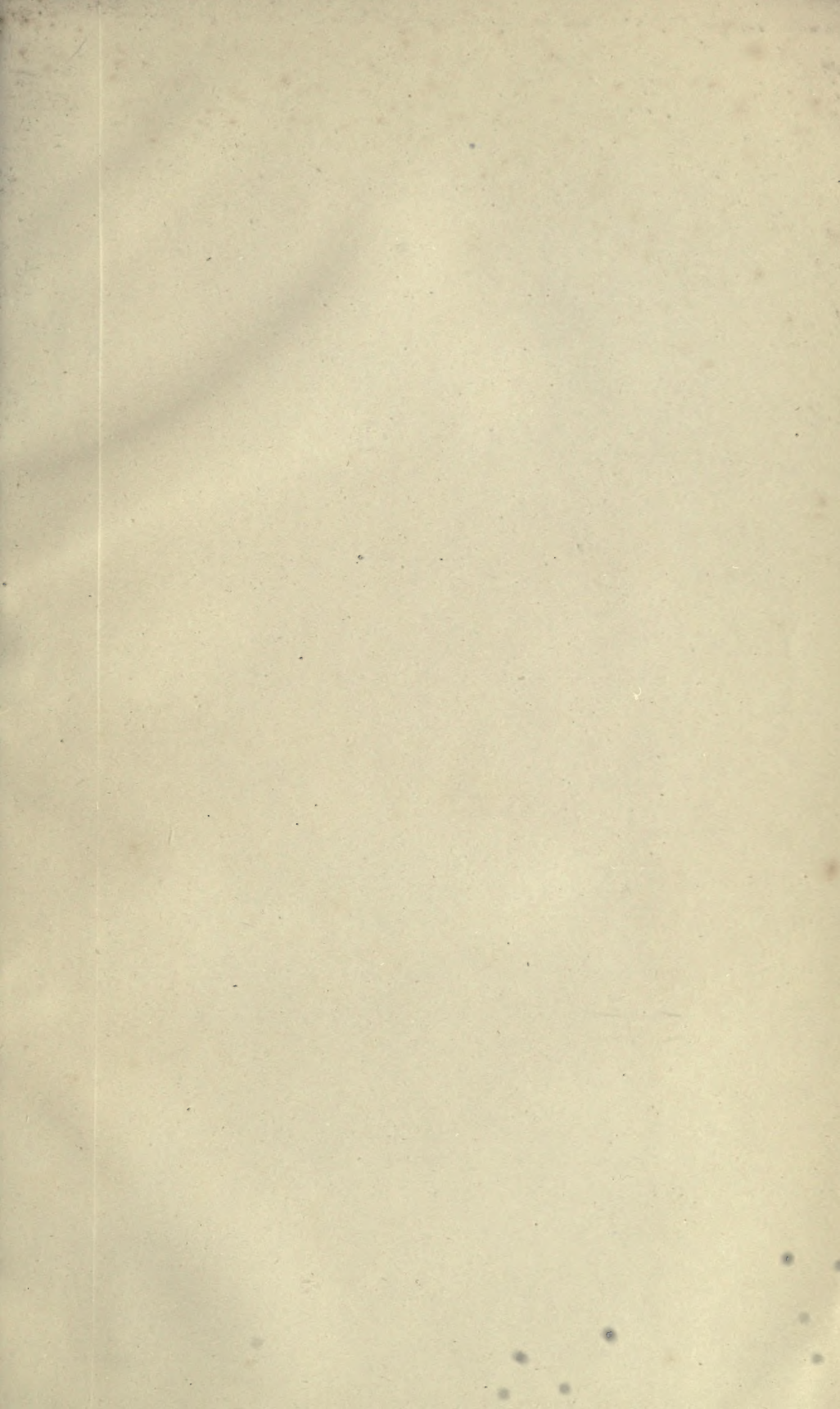
Nîmes, the ancient model from which it was copied. From the Madeleine we walked on to the Wesleyan Church, Rue Roquépine, the beautifully simple service, followed by an instructive and excellent sermon, contrasting favourably with the ornate ceremonial we had just witnessed. In the afternoon we made a pilgrimage to St. Denis and returned to Paris by train. The trains were crowded with people evidently returning from their Sunday's holiday in the country.

Monday, May 11th. Left this morning for London; *via* Calais and Dover. The policy of the railway companies in France does not seem to be in the direction of running empty carriages. The passenger traffic on this line should be a splendid source of income, all the express trains between Paris and London being generally full, and most of the carriages first-class. The channel passage being now reduced to about an hour and twenty minutes, reduces considerably the inconveniences and suffering which very often attend the crossing of this sometimes terribly rough bit of sea.

The hurry and skurry at Dover and the tremendous rush of the express finally brought us to London early in the evening.

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 FINIS.





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